FRIENDS
OF ACPL

THE TRADE WIND

CORNELIA MEIGS

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Now they had taken refuge on the highest point.
FRONTISPIECE. *See page 240.*

The Beacon Hill Bookshelf

The Trade Wind

By
Cornelia Meigs

With Illustrations in Color by
Henry Pitz

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

With the idea of forming a collection of books which because of their approved quality and appealing format would prove an ideal library for boys and girls, The Beacon Hill Bookshelf was inaugurated in the autumn of 1924 with eight volumes. Since then books have been added until now the series numbers eighteen volumes. Of these, sixteen are long-established favorites, and one a newer book, which have been endorsed by children's librarians, while the latest addition is "The Trade Wind", the winner of The Beacon Hill Bookshelf Prize Competition.

From nearly four hundred manuscripts submitted in the prize contest for the story most suitable for inclusion in this series, Miss Meigs' story was the choice of the judges (Ruth G. Hopkins, Librarian, Polytechnic Preparatory School, Brooklyn; Clayton H. Ernst, Editor, *The Open Road for Boys,* Boston; and Bertha E. Mahony, Director, The Bookshop for Boys and Girls, Boston) to receive the prize of two thousand dollars, because of its vibrant atmosphere, its picturesque life, and its strong appeal to the creative imagination.

The publishers are confident that "The Trade Wind" will have immediate recognition as a splendid addition to the series.

July 1, 1927

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THE TRADE WIND

CHAPTER I

AT THE WATER STAIRS

David Dennison lounged in the window seat, with his elbows on the sill, looking out into the gathering darkness of the garden and wondering idly as to just what moment would bring the heavily moving Sabbath day to an end. Sunset, so he had always been told, was the close of the Puritan day of rest; but who was to know when it was sunset, with the west so banked with mounting clouds? Flashes of lightning were already beginning to play between the rolling thunderheads and dull mutterings had, for some time, been sounding from afar.

Perhaps his father had sat in the same deep recess of the window, in his own restless youth, and had chafed, as David was doing, for the strict Sabbath to draw to a close. And, doubtless, his father before him! Four generations of Dennisons had been brought up in the old house, whose sturdy timbers had been hewn when the New England forests still came down to the sea, and when the colony of Massachusetts was yet young. The spirit of adventure and the love of freedom which had

carried the first Dennison across the water had always fought bitterly with the sober Puritanism which had also reigned in that stout voyager's heart. The same struggle had gone on in most of his children, with the old Puritanism developing, as the generations passed, into a vehement passion for political liberty. Change was now in the air, such great change as David, in the heedlessness of youth, was too blind to realize to the full. He thought that it was only the habit of querulous talk that made his Aunt Candace say — by his own computation — ten thousand times within the last few months:

"Eh, dear, these distressing modern ways! This talk of freedom — this abuse of good King George and his councilors, when we all know they are doing their best! Some may call the treasonable talk liberalism, but I call it the work of the devil. The enemy of all men is going about like a roaring lion amongst us, these days!"

So thought timid maiden ladies, and even folk of sturdier mold, in the Year of our Lord, seventeen hundred and seventy-three.

The diamond-paned window stood open to the lifeless air of a garden as trim and orderly as was the room within, a room where the straight mahogany furniture had always stood in stiff order

against the walls, and where the heavy curtains had always been tied back in exactly the same folds. And yet the room, for all its unchanging soberness, had housed, in father and son, two such wild and restless spirits as seemed ready, sometimes, to burst the very four walls, with their longing for life and adventure. And the garden — at least the garden reached down to the water, where, at the harbor's edge, the rising and falling tide lapped against the sea wall.

"Nothing happens, nothing ever happens!" David kept repeating to himself. It was the refrain of his turbulent dissatisfaction, summing up his discontent, not only with the long, dull Sabbath day which was about to end in storm and rain, but with all the years of his life which had gone before, peaceful, well-guarded years which had suited him not at all.

Swinging his long legs over the sill, he slipped through the window and dropped upon the path below. The heavy air was sweet with the last June roses, and, as he passed the little garden house, sweeter still with the honeysuckle which dropped its long garlands over the closed and bolted door. Once David's father had used the quaint, green-shuttered little building for an office; but now the place was still and empty, with weeds and flowers

spreading over the worn stone steps where so many feet used formerly to come and go. David, as he passed down to the waterside, looked the other way, that he might not see the locked door. Although the news of his father's death was now months old, he still could not bear the reminder of the closed garden house.

The Sabbath was surely over now; for the garden had grown so dark that he could not see the water that washed against the foot of the timbered steps. The storm had rolled up overhead, and the pattering rain had begun to fall. David liked to feel it on his face as he leaned against a juniper tree and tried to look through the blackness at the rising tide below. His restless thoughts were still repeating the same refrain, "Nothing ever happens!"

A sudden flash of lightning rent the dark about him, and showed to his amazed eyes such a startling sight that he could never remember hearing the clap of thunder which must have followed. Six or seven men were coming along the path which slanted across the lower corner of the garden, men with sea-beaten faces, this one with a red handkerchief tied around his head, that one with an unsheathed cutlass in his hand. The noise of the rain drowned the crunching of their heavy boots, as they tramped

They were a rough-looking company, all in seamen's garb. *Page 7.*

along the smooth gravel of the path. They were a rough-looking company, all in seamen's garb, and worn and tattered garb at that. They carried in their midst some one of a different order, a young man whose drawn face was as colorless as the fine linen of his open shirt. At every step, his head jerked limply against the arm of the man who supported his shoulders, and his own arm, in a torn sleeve, hung down so lifelessly that one hand trailed along the wet margin of the walk. One of the men stepped on the limp, dragging hand with his heavy sea boot, making David wince; but the unconscious face resting against the dark shoulder gave no sign.

The vision came and was gone in an instant; nor did any second flash follow to reveal more. David, as white-cheeked as the limp, stricken youth who had been carried past, could only stand staring into the darkness, listening to the vague shuffle of feet as the men bore their burden down the steps. He heard the sound of a boat grounding on the bit of sand below the sea wall; he heard the men wading in, to push off. Then came the grinding of rowlocks as the craft moved away with her heavier lading; finally the dull creak and splash of the oars were lost in the louder noise of the drumming rain.

After waiting some little time, for he knew not

what, David walked back to the house, lifted himself in through the low casement and closed the window, since the rain was splashing on the sill. He lit the candle on the table and went back to draw the curtain. The thunderstorm was going by, although the rain still fell steadily. The last flash of lightning lit the garden again, showing only the wet lilac bushes and the storm-beaten roses. Yet even after that was gone, and he could see merely the dim reflection of his own face showing ghostly in the small-paned window, David still stood looking out.

He was thinking, as he so often did, with a dreary, aching heart, of his father, Amos Dennison. Sailors always made him think of his father, who had been a ship's master before he had become a merchant. He had been the center of all of his son's thought and affection since the boy's earliest years. David's mother had died so long ago that the loss was beyond the reach of his earliest memories; and all of his knowledge of her was through what his father had said from time to time.

"Your mother was a wise and understanding woman, David," was his frequent, vague remark which conveyed little to the boy's mind except what he believed as a matter of course. Even Aunt Candace, who kept house for them and whose untiring

tongue ran all day from one subject to another, had little to say that could add to the gentle, colorless memory that was all that David knew of his mother.

But Amos Dennison's was so vivid a personality, that it seemed impossible to believe, even now, that death had quenched that vital presence, that the tall, grave, forceful man had really vanished forever from the silent house and would sit no more in his little counting room in the garden. After being twenty years a sea captain, he had retired and had entered upon the life of a merchant. Then, less than a year ago, he had suddenly announced his intention of going to sea again, even though almost the whole of another twenty years had passed since he had become a shore dweller. He was the owner of three ships, and in one of them he had sailed away upon that voyage whose object had been understood by no one.

Three months later had begun that terrible period of anxiety and doubt, the dragging days when the ship was overdue, the weeks of waiting in struggling hope, the rumors that came in, by one vessel after another, that Amos Dennison's ship had last been seen in a hurricane off the Windward Islands. Finally there had arrived the definite news that a passing schooner had seen the broken bones of his vessel bleaching on a West India coral reef, and

that all on board of her were known to be lost. It was so that the tidings of his father's death had come to David, by chance driblets of news which had, at last, made up a total of undefeated certainty. The boy had clung to hope far longer than had any one else; but even he had been obliged to give in at last.

It cannot be known how long David would have stood by the window, revolving heavy thoughts in his heart and staring out into the dark and the rain with unseeing eyes. He was interrupted at last by fat Anna, the ancient serving maid, who was ushering in a visitor. It was Master Joseph Camberwell, Amos Dennison's friend and legal adviser, a long, thin man, with an angular, bald head and big-knuckled hands. When he spoke, as he did at once, of David's father, his deep-set eyes kindled and brightened with the light of such genuine affection that the grief-stricken boy could not fail to see it.

"There are certain matters concerning your father and yourself of which I have wished to speak to you," he said, as David lighted the second candle and drew up the big chair. "Your Aunt Candace came home from the afternoon meeting with Mistress Camberwell, and for that reason I thought that it would be a good hour for holding converse with you."

David smiled a little as he set the armchair beside the table. Whether Master Camberwell had sought to escape the clatter of tongues which must be going forward in his house, or whether he had seized upon this as a feasible moment for uninterrupted conversation with the boy, the older man did not state. In either case he had chosen well, and he wasted no precious minutes, but came to the point at once.

"Have you and your aunt been straitened for means, since — since this disaster to your father's ship?" he asked bluntly, and added, "As Amos Dennison's closest friend, I have a right to know."

"We have what we need," David replied. "There was something left, as you know, even though my father had mortgaged his two ships to get money for his venture with the third. And I am earning more at the countinghouse than I did six months ago, and —" here he sighed and his voice fell to an involuntary note of discouragement, "and in time I may even come to understand something of this business of buying and selling."

Although his whole heart was upon other things, there had seemed no better choice for David than to take the place offered him in the countingroom of his father's associate, Robert Pierce. Here he

had been spending his days, adding up columns in the big ledgers, making bills for the lading of those ships upon which he so greatly desired to sail, or struggling to master those intricacies of orders and counter-orders which at that time bound American commerce. The hand of King George the Third lay very heavy upon the colonial shipping of that day. So grasping a hand was it that men were beginning to say that its hold must some time break. David had heard his elders talk much of the matter; although here in Rogersport discussion was not so intense as in the busy market places of Boston and Salem. The boy had been hearing such talk for long, and thought of it as only one more of the bitter and weary burdens of mercantile life. He felt that nothing would ever really be done on either side, and that the wiseacres would go on shaking their heads and making sage prophecies to the end of time.

"It was not a great fortune, that of your father's, at the best," the older man went on, "and I am glad to hear that you and your aunt are not in real want. Perhaps in time you will recover what is gone, if your bent is for careful and conservative trade." He sat looking at the boy, his long face very serious above his white stock, his glance very keen as it searched David's face. It was impossible to re-

gard those friendly eyes and speak other than the whole truth.

"I hate trade," David burst out. "I wish for but one thing, to follow the sea."

"I feared so," replied the man of law slowly, "I feared so. In your father's heart the merchant was always struggling with the man of adventure; sometimes one had the upper hand, sometimes the other. And during the heyday of his life —" he broke off abruptly, and sat thinking. "Before he set out upon this mad voyage from which he did not return," he went on presently, "he said something to me of leaving a letter for you; but I gather that such a thing has not been found. It would, I am sure, have explained the purpose of his going. Have you looked through all the papers in his desk? Have you searched your memory for the recollection of anything that was said or done ere he set forth, that might shed some light upon the question which we none of us can answer?"

In the sharpness of his grief, David had avoided both tasks. He had glanced through his father's papers, had felt sure that there was no message left for him, and had postponed a more thorough search until the pain of accomplishing it should be less great. He shook his head in answer to Master Camberwell's query.

"There has been nothing found," he said.

"He should have left us some message; he should have left it," cried Master Camberwell, with sudden vehemence, striking his big hand upon the table. "I asked him once, point-blank, the purpose of his sudden venture at sea and he only smiled and said that no one was to know what it was, save his son David alone, and that only in the event of his never returning. And now he is gone from us, with no word left behind; and we are never to hear the truth. A strange man was Amos Dennison, a friend whom I loved long and never really understood. And in spite of the mystery of his death, he has left a good record, and as honorable a name as any man in this province. You should be proud that you bear the name of Dennison, lad."

"And why," asked the boy abruptly, "why did I not have his whole name, as I have so often wished that I had? Why was I called, not Amos, but David?"

The other looked at him in some wonder.

"Did they never tell you that?" he exclaimed. "Have you never known whence you got the name of David?"

"No," cried the eager boy. "There was no friend or kinsman of my father's who was called so, I am sure."

He had pondered long upon this question and had never found any answer. To ask his father seemed impossible; since, much as the two loved each other, there were certain barriers of silence between the elder and the younger Dennison which neither seemed able to break. Once, David had tried asking his Aunt Candace, who was such an unquenchable talker that the idea of her keeping a secret seemed quite impossible. But in reply to his pressing queries she had merely pursed up her lips and answered sharply:

"That you shall not know. It was a wicked, unfilial reason, and you shall never hear of it from me."

Her words had so greatly increased his curiosity that he waited now in eager expectancy for Master Camberwell's further words.

"Ah, that is a tale — that is indeed a tale!" the man of law said slowly. He reflected for a moment, as though weighing the matter judicially, and then gravely shook his head. "If neither your aunt nor your father told you, then it is not for me to lay the knowledge before you. It will come to you in good time. How old are you, David? You are not yet nineteen, I think."

"No," responded David, flushing with the consciousness that he was quite evidently not so old as

that, "I will not be eighteen until my next birthday."

"Indeed? I had thought you were fully eighteen," observed Master Camberwell, regarding steadily the tall, fair-haired boy opposite him. At this David flushed again, this time with pleasure. "When you are fully come to man's estate," the older man finally went on, "there are certain things which you must know, concerning your father. But until then you must wait with what patience you can muster."

And with that the interview ended; since Master Camberwell evidently feared further questioning and considered it wise to take his departure in some haste.

As David sat alone in the silent parlor, with the light of the candle cutting a circle out of the darkness about him, he was attempting to do what his father's friend had suggested, to search his mind for the memory of some word or event which could explain his father's strange venture. He remembered very vividly the day which had chanced to be the last one that they had sat together in the little garden house. Amos Dennison had been showing his son the secret drawers in the big desk, of which there were several, and all of them cleverly concealed. In those days, when safes were unknown

and locks were clumsy and simple, men of affairs were obliged to have recourse to secret places to guard their gold and private papers.

"There is one more," his father had said at last. "See if you can find it. Your hand is near it now."

At that point they had been interrupted by the entrance of a sunburned sailor, a stout man with a tuft of gray whisker under each ear. From his speech it was evident that he came from on board one of the English ships then lying in the harbor. David saw, by his father's face, that the man was a stranger to him.

"I was to ask you," began the seaman, "if you still minded a man you used to know, by name John Becket."

"Assuredly," answered Amos Dennison. "He and I were ship's comrades on a voyage to the Dutch Cape Settlements, and a good fellow he was. Now, so I hear, he no longer follows the sea, but is master of his father's forge in Devon."

"That is the one," said the man. "If you remembered him, I was to give you this letter." He drew out the missive from under his coat and handed it to Amos Dennison. David noted that the crackling sheets smelled of tar and tobacco as his father unfolded them.

"And I was to add this, which perhaps John

Becket did not wish to put into writing," the man continued. "I was to say that the lovers of freedom in America have friends on the other side of the water that they know not of. I was to say this further — that the hammers of John Becket's forge are beating out destruction to American liberty, but that he cannot gainsay the command of King George. And I was to say this — that a clever Yankee trader can accomplish as much as a King's Councilor, if he comes quickly, that trade is a great power; a man can sometimes do more by means of it than he can by force of arms."

He repeated his message in a singsong voice, evidently having said it over many times to himself. Amos Dennison looked puzzled.

"I do not make much meaning of that," he observed.

"Nor do I," replied the sailor, "but I think there is something in it that smacks of treason and a halter about an honest man's neck. I am glad to have the message told you and done with. I would have carried it for no other man than John Becket."

After the sailor was gone, David's father had sat pondering so deeply that his son did not remind him that he had not yet shown him the last of the secret hiding places. It happened that they were never alone together in the garden house again.

Soon after, Amos Dennison had begun hasty preparations for a voyage, and in less than a month he was at sea. David had deemed the sailor's message mere nonsense, and had scarcely thought of it again until this moment. He had believed that his father had dismissed it as carelessly as he had himself; but he wondered now whether the letter and the strange words from over the sea had not really been the occasion of the journey. The thought had never before entered his mind.

He went over and over the stranger's words, and found them as much of a riddle now as he had on that morning in the garden house. Some day he would perhaps tell Master Camberwell of the matter and see whether he could understand it. Meanwhile, he would do what he had so long postponed, and go over the papers in the big locked desk. It began to be insistently plain to him that now was the best occasion for performing that dreaded duty. Aunt Candace was absent, and could not trouble him with those persistent questions and words of fluttering sympathy which were still unendurable to his unhealed grief. The keys of the garden house and of the desk were in the drawer of the table beside him. With a long sigh he took out the jingling bunch and rose from his chair.

He took up the candle from the table, opened

the door and went down the passage. Old Anna, as he had thought, was dozing by the wide chimney corner in the kitchen as he passed on his way to the dark entry. The moment he got outside, a passing gust of wind blew out his candle. He hesitated for a moment, but did not turn back, knowing that he could make a light when he reached the shelter of the little building showing before him in the dark. The rain had diminished, and the clouds had broken a little, so that there were a few stars showing dimly above the tree tops. The wind was still hurrying through the wet garden, slapping at the dripping boughs and sprinkling him with drops as he passed down the path.

The key and the keyhole were very large, so that he had no trouble in opening the door under the little columned porch. The single room within smelt close and dusty, especially so since the breeze slammed the door behind him the moment after he had stepped inside. David was fumbling to find the tinder box which he was certain must be in its old place on the mantel, when a sound behind him made him turn with his hand still lifted. Footsteps were coming along the gravel path toward the door. They stopped, and a groping hand seemed, from the sound, to be trying to insert a key. The boy heard a low exclamation as the newcomer found

the door already unlocked. David had just time to step back into the darkest corner, when there was a heavy tread on the threshold, and some one came in.

The stranger seemed as used to the place as himself; for he also stepped over to the chimney piece and appeared to be searching for the tinder box. But before he found it, the door swung open again; although this time there had been no sound of feet. As it was lighter outside than within, David thought that he could see a thin, quick figure come slipping in and stand, for a second, irresolute, on the threshold. Some movement of the man by the chimney betrayed his presence and the place where he stood. With a quick sound and a muffled cry, the stealthy intruder sprang from his place in the dimness of the doorway, and, in the close, hot darkness, the two unknown beings strove together in desperate encounter. There was never a word spoken. Only the scraping of feet, the crash of an overturned chair and the deep hoarse breathing of one of the combatants told of the furious battle which was raging up and down in the narrow blackness of the little room.

CHAPTER II

THE GARDEN HOUSE

David, drawing back into his corner, was completely at a loss as to what to do. It seemed certain that murder would be done, there within scarcely more than a yard of him, and that he must interfere. But in whose behalf? He had no means of deciding upon which side of the struggle justice lay; and so let the battle rage on, as he stood wondering. More than once the two pressed almost against him, as one man or the other staggered back against the wall or the chimney; but both were too much absorbed, each in defending his life against the other, to guess that a third person stood so near. Back and forth they surged, until it seemed that the scuffling of feet, the deep gasps of panting breath, and the thudding of heavy bodies against chair or desk or window ledge, would never come to an end.

At last, however, there was the scrape of a slipping foot, a wild, high-throated shriek of terror, and one man was down.

"Have you had enough, friend," said a deep

clear voice after a moment, "or shall I clasp your throat a little closer?"

The answer was a choked exclamation and a hardly articulate cry:

"Are you not Amos Dennison?"

"No," was the emphatic answer.

"Is it you, Andrew Bardwell?" came the high voice again. "Loose your fingers, or you will be the death of me."

"That is what I should like well to be," was the answer. "What mercy should I show to you, Jethro Slee? You seek Amos Dennison, do you, and he lost, these six months ago, off the coast of Saint Lucia!"

"Amos Dennison dead!" cried the man who had been addressed as Jethro Slee. Evidently the clutching hands had loosed his throat, for he spoke more plainly and seemed to have struggled to a sitting posture. "Amos Dennison dead, do you say? And I had vowed that he should die by my hand, for what he did to me that day on the quay of Milfontes. My fortunes have been broken from that hour."

"What?" exclaimed the deep voice of Andrew Bardwell. "Could any honest man break the fortunes of such as you? Begone from here. Since you have failed of your errand, I will not trouble to

chastise you as Amos did; but you had better make haste ere I call the watch." He moved back, and the other rose quickly and hastened with the same light footsteps toward the door. "I will just make certain that you do not prowl about, frightening the good folk of this household out of their wits," added Andrew Bardwell. "There is no trusting you when shadows are about, Jethro Slee."

"Nay, you do not need to lay your hand upon my collar, Master Bardwell," cried the other, fairly whimpering in apprehension. "I will go as quickly and as far as you desire."

They went out together, leaving David dazed and bewildered by the suddenness of their coming and their departure. He heard their footsteps die away upon the path, yet still stood listening, feeling sure that one or the other would return. But at length, hearing no further sound, he came out of his corner, groped once more for the tinder box, found it and lit his candle. Although he was much shaken by this incomprehensible adventure, he was still bound to go through with the task which he had come to perform. He set the key in the lock of the desk, found the bolt obstinate, and drew the candle closer that he might better see what he was about.

It was thus that he became aware of a folded

paper lying upon the top of the desk. He took it up and saw that it was yellow and worn, but was not covered with the dust that lay so thick over everything else in the room. By the hand of what messenger had it so lately come there? He did not ponder long, for he had opened the sheets and had observed his father's writing and the words he had so long desired to see.

"My dear son David—"

He stood so close to the candle that he nearly thrust the yellow page into the flame, as he began to read.

It seems the height of impossibility [the letter ran] that, as I sit here with the windows open to a soft August evening, as I hear your voice in the garden, calling to a comrade across the hedge, it seems unbelievable that I should be leaving you and that, perchance, I may never be coming back. Although I have great hope that my mission may be accomplished honorably and safely, I must yet take the sensible precaution of leaving you certain messages, in case this expedition should end in unseen disaster. I wish to tell you of certain money matters; I wish to explain to you the purpose of this journey which is causing so much wonder and consternation among my good friends; and I wish also to speak of such personal affairs which shall make clear to you why you bear the name of David. And I shall tell you a little of those past years of mine, of which I have never before spoken.

The draught from the open door had caused the candle to flicker, so that David was forced to close it before he sat down in his father's chair and plunged into the body of the letter.

My business affairs are in the hands of Joseph Camberwell and Robert Pierce, who will look to them safely. But I have long ago laid aside for you the sum of five hundred pounds in gold, to be used solely in accordance with your own judgment, in any venture which you shall deem wise and of some benefit to others beside yourself. I wish you to have the same freedom of choice which I took for myself, when I was of your years.

Secondly, I would explain to you —

David had come to the end of a page; he turned it quickly and found upon the next sheet only a single line, " why I have undertaken this voyage of high adventure —"

And there the letter ended. Some one, perhaps himself, had come into the garden house upon that August evening and had broken in on Amos Dennison's task. Looking back at the date, David saw that it had been begun only two days before his father's sailing. In the rush of settling final business, the elder Dennison had plainly found no time to go back to his writing; and thus David was to be denied the answers to those questions which lay so near to his heart. The boy sat staring at the

blank page before him for a long time; then resolutely set his hand to the reluctant key, unlocked the desk and opened the lid.

The different documents were in better order than he had expected. Here were bundles of invoices, bills of insurance, clearance papers and all of the thousand and one scraps of paper that go with the affairs of a busy merchant. There were only a few private letters, and if there had ever been any papers having to do with earlier years, they had long ago been destroyed. David went methodically through the whole of his appointed task, and, in the end, had to admit to himself that he knew nothing more of Amos Dennison than when he had begun. Yet for all his discouragement, he was conscious within himself of a vague restlessness and quickening, of some feeling which he had never known before. He did not understand that, in that same room, in that same chair, his father had sat going over the glowing memories of years that had been crowded full of far journeyings, of battles with hostile natives on the hot sands of strange seacoasts, of dickering with brown-faced merchants whose tongues knew not the meaning of truth and whose silken girdles hid, each one, a long, sharp knife. He could not know that the irrepressible spirit of seeking, which had dwelt

in the father, lived again in the son, that it had been stirred in its sleep by the names of the ships and the foreign ports that were set forth amongst the papers in the desk. Nor could he have any thought that, before the night was out, those slumbering instincts were all to be startled into vivid wakefulness.

Very carefully, David laid the bundles of documents together once more, put the unfinished letter on top of them, and turned himself to further search. Somewhere, laid away in the hidden recesses of the old desk, must be that sum of money of which his father had spoken. Neither Joseph Camberwell nor Robert Pierce, his father's executors, had ever spoken to him of that definite bequest of " five hundred pounds in gold." The gift seemed a far more personal one than the estate which was to come to him in due time. For this reason, and with a still persistent hope that there might be some message laid away for him along with the money, David set himself to explore the secret hoarding places of which Amos Dennison had told him.

He opened the first, and discovered nothing but a few battered papers referring to a ship of which he had never heard. The second was larger, and contained a much-worn leather psalm book. The words, " Amos Dennison, His Book," were written

on the flyleaf, and within, upon the margins of the pages, were various notes and entries in the same hand. The dates were all of them at least twenty-five years old and some as much as forty. The edges were tattered, and the paper showed brown spots here and there, as though from splashes of sea water. David's father had talked to his son so little of religious matters that it seemed scarcely possible that he could have made this book his daily companion through those years of voyaging before he settled down to a merchant's life. The boy had never seen it before and was certain that it had lain hidden in the drawer through all the years that Amos Dennison had kept his countingroom in the little garden house.

There was now but one other place for him to search out. What had his father said of that final secret drawer —

"There is one more, your hand is close to it now."

David pressed every promising point of carving, ran his hand over every promising surface and discovered nothing.

"I cannot find it," he cried aloud in complete despair. His father had opened the way to set free that restless spirit which was so like his own; and now ill fortune seemed to have slammed the door to again.

He was so absorbed that he had not heard a step upon the path outside, had not even been conscious that the candle flickered and guttered again in the draught from the opening door. Some one had come up behind him; but he could not have guessed whether he who had returned was the deep-voiced Andrew Bardwell or the softly stepping Jethro Slee. He was not even aware that any person was near him, until an arm reached across his shoulder and a hand pressed the carving not an inch from where he himself had tried it at the last attempt. There was the sound of smooth sliding, and a drawer, larger than the others, slipped out into the open pigeonhole directly before him. It moved easily, but slowly, as though heavily weighted; and within it could be seen the dull glittering of gold coins.

For almost a minute, David sat immovable in his father's chair, staring at the gold before him. Then, since there was no sound behind him, he turned his head slowly and looked up to see who it was who had come in without his hearing and who had revealed to him the secret of the hidden drawer. A tall, square-shouldered man stood behind him, a man with a clean-cut face and a ruddy skin that could belong to no other than some one who followed the sea.

"You are David Dennison?" said the stranger.

"When I saw you down yonder in the garden, staring out of the darkness in the lightning flash, I knew you at once. You are like your father."

The deep voice grew softer over the last words. There was no man who had ever been a friend of Amos Dennison who could speak of him without a change of tone. This, David had often noted, and knew instantly that the stranger in the dark must have stood once in close comradeship with his father. He answered quickly:

"I saw you carrying some one down to a boat at the foot of the water stairs. Who was it? What had happened?"

"I came back to tell you of that, as well as to bring you the letter which your father left with me. I see you have found that already, and have read it. Could it have been that you were here in the garden house, in the dark, all through the astonishing encounter that I had with that crawling rascal, Jethro Slee? I thought when I found the door unlocked that some one must have come in before me."

"Is the man you called Jethro Slee gone clean away?" asked David. "I heard him say that he sought Amos Dennison; but I did not know that my father had an enemy in the world."

The man came forward into the light, and sat

down beside the desk, as he continued talking.

"No man of your father's high and vigorous spirit could have been without the hatred of some dishonest wretch of Slee's sort. But I did not know the fellow had cherished his murderous grudge for so long. It was in the tiny, Spanish port of Milfontes that the quarrel began, more years ago than I can number at the moment. Your father and I were standing together on the wharf, waiting for the cutter from our ship, the only American vessel in the roadstead, when a poor Spanish fishwife came to him, her honest face a pitiable picture of trouble. It seemed that a man, calling himself a native of Massachusetts, had been put ashore, sick with fever, at that little port, and that she, out of pity, had taken him into her house and nursed him back to health. On recovering, he had not only left her without thanks or payment, but had carried away the little store of gold pieces she had laid aside for her old age. He had found them where they were hidden under the hearthstone, and had gone away with them in the night. She had thought that he would take the first American ship to touch at that port, and she begged your father to watch for him.

"She had scarcely gone out of sight behind a fishing shed before here came Jethro, clad in a very

decent black coat and wearing his best air of fallen gentility. Both your father and I knew that narrow, black-eyed face well, for the man had indeed been born in Massachusetts, and had been turned off one of the Rogersport ships for petty stealing in the forecastle. But he, hoping that Amos did not recognize him, came up boldly and told, in his cracked voice, how he had been left in that God-forsaken place to die, had been robbed of even what little he had, and would now be grateful for a passage home in any capacity.

" ' Though I am no ordinary seaman,' he told us, ' I could serve you better as a clerk, if you should want one.'

" Amos listened to his whole story, while he signed to me to fetch back the woman, that we might make sure that this was the man.

" The moment she laid eyes upon him she broke out into a shrill cry of accusation and, while Slee stuttered and attempted denial, Amos took one long stride toward him, caught him by the back of the black coat and shook him until his teeth clacked and his heels cracked together and his evil eyes went round in his head. As he shook, the gold pieces began to rattle out of him, and the woman went down on her knees, sobbing with joy and gathering them up and calling down blessings on Amos from

all the saints in the calendar. When at last the man was shaken empty, Amos set him down on his trembling legs and bade him begone. He went fleeing up the wharf, with all the fishwives turning out to pelt him with their ill-smelling wares and to cry shrill curses after him. He stopped but once, to call out upon Amos such a vow of revenge as to make your blood chill within you; but Amos only laughed and went down to his boat. Slee is an unforgetting devil, and I doubt not he has sought your father's life on some occasion before this. He is a great coward; but he is also a great harborer of long-nursed grudges. His lean, mean body was all atremble with rage and hate and quaking terror when we grappled in the dark."

The stranger rose from his seat.

"The air is heavy in this little place. Is there not a small window at the back, under the eaves, too high for prying eyes to look in?"

He seemed to be almost as familiar as was David with the countingroom, as he opened the window and let in a breath of garden-scented freshness. David got up, lit the second candle which stood upon the mantel and, by its light, was able to inspect his visitor more closely. He had bushy, gray hair, and steady eyes of the darkest blue. His boots were wet with sea water; and undried raindrops stood glisten-

ing on the sleeve of his rough coat. He had finished opening the casement and came full into the candle-light, where he stood, returning David's gaze in earnest silence. He did not speak again until the boy had looked his fill.

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"I am Andrew Bardwell, as you may have guessed," he said.

David could think of no reply; but still sat staring at him.

The other went on after a pause. "I see that you have never heard that name before to-night; your look is blank enough to tell me that. Yet I was your father's nearest friend. He has told me himself that it was true; and the words made me more proud than if King George had pinned one of his jeweled crosses to my sailor's coat. The chances of the sea have not brought me often, of late years, to Rogersport, and my friendship belongs, also, to that portion of your father's life of which he spoke so little. Yet I was here, by good fortune, on that day when he last set sail. As I said good-by, he pulled out the letter he had written for you, and bade me give it you, should he fail to come back.

"'I was disturbed in the writing of it, and thrust it unfinished into my pocket, hoping to complete it later,' he told me. 'Should you hear bad news of

me, do you keep this for my son David. Perhaps he will care little to hear more of me; but, if he is moved to ask you any questions of his father and the closed chapters of that father's life, tell him all that he would know.' That is the message which I carry to you from Amos Dennison. I had long since been given a key to the countingroom here, so I came hither, thinking to leave the letter and to see if I could call you out from the house without awaking the curiosity of Mistress Candace Dennison, whose flow of talk I know well. As you chanced to see, I was interrupted in my errand by Jethro Slee."

Such a surge of eager questions rose within David that he stammered and hesitated, not knowing where to begin. Meanwhile Andrew Bardwell drew his chair somewhat out from the corner, seated himself again, and continued speaking.

"Sit down in your father's place. It is good to see you there, for you are like him. I had never seen you before an hour ago, when I was in the boat at the foot of the water stairs and looked up to observe you in the brief vision of a lightning flash. Very startled you appeared, and well you might be, at the sight of that strange company striding down through your garden."

"Was the man dead, whom they carried?" asked David.

"No, only knocked over the head with the butt of a musket, so that his wits were scattered out of him for a little. He will be waking up, dazed and aching, presently, but with plenty of life left in him for a dozen more of such adventures. It was only a little difference with the revenue officers, in which we came out rather the better, though we did have to carry off our man by the quickest way that we could find."

"It was — smuggling?" inquired David.

"Of a sort," agreed Andrew Bardwell. "All men are driven to it in these days when our ships are forbidden to trade with other than British ports, or to carry any but British goods. It is a strange thing how the markets are full of molasses and sugar from the French West Indies, of wine from Spain and Portugal, and of tea and pepper from the Dutch Spice Islands, and no one seems to know just how such articles crept in. It was not goods from the ship under my command that were being landed this night; it was only that some of my men and I saw a company of friends in trouble with the king's officers, and could not forbear lending a hand."

"But that one who was hurt, he did not look like a sailor," persisted David.

"Young Anthony Churchill is a divinity student

at Harvard College; but, like other young patriots who are burning with zeal for liberty, he has bound himself to give aid to those who fall afoul of the unjust laws. He will not grudge a broken head in the good cause, and will be out again with the smugglers on the next dark night. Your father had afforded us the use of his water stairs for such a purpose, many times before this."

David, feeling very slight and young in that big chair which his broad-shouldered father had filled so amply, sat silent, regarding his guest gravely. He had been taught to have little trust in strangers — old Anna feared them, Aunt Candace suspected them, and even his fellow workers at the counting-house and Master Joseph Camberwell held the opinion that it were best to think little of an unknown man. But here was some one whom, after the first words he had spoken, it had seemed difficult to suspect. It was impossible to do so now, as he began to unlock the gates of that silence which had guarded Amos Dennison's history. The boy felt that the quickening within him was kindled to a glowing spark, while he warmed to the knowledge that was beginning to dawn upon him. His father had not been one of those who had bowed meekly under the oppressive laws, did not belong to that company who complained much and did nothing. So the

water stairs had been used to baffle King George's men before this! They should be so used once more.

"When your comrades come through the garden again," David said, "let them whistle and I will come out to them. I should like to give them aid also."

"You speak like Amos Dennison over again," declared the man opposite, smiling warmly.

"And why should I not have been Amos Dennison?" cried the boy. "Why did they not give me my father's name?"

Andrew Bardwell stared at him across the splash of orange candlelight. "Have they even kept that from you, how you came to be called David?" he exclaimed.

"You know that also? You will tell me?" There was the eagerness of a whole young lifetime in David's tone.

"I have come here to tell you everything you wish to know, that amongst the others. And the answer to that question lies close to your elbow, though I do not wonder that you have never guessed it."

Andrew Bardwell leaned over, took up the battered psalm book and laid it upon his knee, pressing it with a friendly touch of his big brown hand.

"Your father and I grew up together," he began. "We poked in the rock pools for crabs; we went fishing together in the bay; we swam together off the bit of beach at the foot of your garden. We talked endlessly of all we thought and felt and wondered; but the most of all our talk was of the sea."

David stirred impatiently in his chair. It seemed to him that the other was making a long beginning to a tale of which he himself wished only to hear the end. Andrew Bardwell, however, seemed not to notice and went on without haste.

"We were both of us destined for other things. Amos' father was a merchant, a rarely prosperous one, who, if he had ever yearned for adventure in his boyhood, had now outlived what he would have called a youthful folly. He wished his son to follow a similar career of buying and selling and putting money by. He had that iron will which attempts to cast in its own mold all things about it, even the shifting quicksilver of a boy's spirit. I used to watch them on the Sabbath day, going up to the meetinghouse, Master Dennison striding over the cobbles with his mind bent upon those dark, unhappy beliefs of his which he called religion, Amos pattering alongside, chattering away of the ships and the blue harbor that showed at the foot of the

street. I used to realize, even then, that neither of the two was paying the least heed to the other.

"My own father was dead, leaving my mother with no great means; and both had set their hearts upon my studying for the law. A pretty barrister I should have made! After three years of studying Latin, I could not decline *mensa, mensæ,* without all the other boys laughing to hear me, and the schoolmaster frowning dark as a thundercloud. But neither Amos nor I wished to thwart the wills of those we loved; and we let things drift, year after year, knowing only vaguely within our hearts where our real destiny lay.

"It was on a Sabbath day, in the middle of meeting, that there came that moment which was to decide what way Amos was to go. We were sitting on the bench together, with his father at the end; I restless and unheeding, as I always was; Amos, attentive and listening. He was always intent, whatever he was doing. I was wriggling on the hard seat, swinging my feet and watching a big bumblebee that had got in through the open window and went zooming about overhead, so that the women ducked their bonnets and even the parson paused in his droning which was so like the bee's own. I was thinking only that we had got through the long prayer and had now begun the psalm,

and that after that the dullest portion of the day's business would begin. Suddenly I felt Amos stiffen and grow tense beside me, and I looked about to see what had happened. There was nothing; the meeting was as still and untroubled as it had been for a whole hour before. Then, slowly, I began to understand that it was the psalm old Parson Canby was reading that had roused Amos to such a pitch."

With his thick fingers, Andrew Bardwell smoothed the worn leather cover of the psalm book. "It is all here," he said, "the poetry he read that day, of sweet-smelling aloes, of ivory palaces and kings' daughters in vestures of gold. Can you understand how, against that cold background of Puritan belief and savage threatenings of everlasting punishment, the beauty of those words leaped out with living light? Can you see how a boy's smoldering heart burned up into clear flame, having waited for just such words to touch the spark of his questing spirit? Amos Dennison has told me that it was from that day that he began to give himself up to dreams of the colorful, shining things of life, and to plans of how he could seek out and find them. Can you see that, lad? Can you understand?"

David nodded. How could he fail to know what had happened to his father when the same fire was

at that moment running through his own veins? To his impatient soul, it seemed a sorry waste of time to ask whether he understood.

"Go on," he said. "Where did he go? How did he find what he sought?"

"He went to sea. A friend of his father's gave him a berth as second mate on a merchant barque, sailing for Liverpool. I think old Master Dennison never spoke to that man again. The ships of Massachusetts did not, at that time, sail for distant enough ports to suit young Amos, so he found a place on an English vessel bound for Smyrna. He rose to be master of her in three voyages, and after that he sailed far seas indeed. He coasted the whole of the shores of the Mediterranean, touching at those teeming, evil, but profitable ports of Algiers and Tunis and Morocco. He saw the hot, palm-fringed shores of lower Africa, he saw the icebergs of the cold, southern seas. He saw the slim towers and flowerlike pagodas and shining domes of Singapore and Bombay and Calcutta. Idols and aloes and ivory palaces, he saw them all."

"And you were with him?"

"I was with him for three voyages. I had gone to sea three months after him; my mother had died and left me free of that impossible duty of following the law. I could not wait for an under officer's

berth; I shipped before the mast; and ill luck followed me wherever I went. Amos found me, drifting about the wharves of Marseilles, ill, half-starved, having deserted from my ship; since of all the forecastle hells upon the sea, hers was the most unendurable. He brought me back to health, took me on his next voyage, and taught me navigation; so that I was able to become a ship's captain myself in time. I was with him on his last voyage to the East. I had got my master's papers; but I had chosen to ship with him once again, when we went on that adventurous journey to India.

"Amos was carrying gifts from England to an Indian rajah, and we were guests at his palace for a brief and fatal three days. A glorious old potentate our host was, with troops of elephants, an army of slaves and a treasure house of jewels where a man might be buried alive in rubies, emeralds and sapphires. On the third day Amos sickened; I have always felt sure he was poisoned by some dusky, jealous devil in that king's house, perhaps by the order of the old monarch himself. We bore him back to his ship and nursed him through the whole of the homeward voyage. It seemed more than once that he must go from us, that we would have to bury him at sea in those vast, chill waters below Africa, which wash around the world.

"In the end he lived, but was never the same man again. The Amos Dennison whom you knew was not the Amos Dennison of his young, splendid days. When it became plain that he was never to be strong enough to follow the sea, he came home and fell into his father's place. He traded and prospered and to very few people did he talk of the voyages for which his bruised heart longed. He married your mother, a wise, tender woman, who knew of his great grief and who knew also how he was to be comforted.

"He said to me once, on one of those long night watches when we walked the quarter-deck together, 'If I should ever marry and have a son, I should call him David; for it was the music of David's poesy which led me across the world to the real life for which my soul longed.' Though I never saw you before this night, I knew the moment I spied your face peering through the dark that here was Amos Dennison's boy and that his name was David."

The boy's tense attitude of listening did not relax, although Andrew Bardwell had ceased speaking. This, then, was the explanation of his bearing the name David, a stranger reason than he had ever dreamed. The tale would give him food for thought through many days to come; now he felt

only that he must learn all he could while Andrew Bardwell was still there to tell him.

"But in the end my father went to sea again," he said.

"He had thought that his lust for roving was quenched forever; and perhaps it was so. But the spirit of the man was never to be quenched; and, when there came a new call to action, it could not rest quiet within him. Amos Dennison had always maintained that there would some day be strife between the liberty-loving American colonists and the ancient, tradition-ridden government that ruled the home country. He was a peaceable man, was Amos, and by that I mean a man who would strive for peace as long as there was honorable hope for it; but who would fight with all there was in him for the right, when peace was no longer possible."

"I had often wondered," observed David, "whether his journey had not something to do with the trouble between King George and the colonies. But what had the man of Devon, what had John Becket to do with it? And why did he send my father a message in riddles?"

He repeated to Andrew Bardwell the whole of that interview as he remembered it, and came back in the end to dwell again on the words which had puzzled him the most, "Trade is a great power; a

man can sometimes do more by means of it than he can by force of arms."

His new friend listened attentively and nodded when the boy had finished.

"Your father wished me to go upon that voyage with him and so made plain the whole matter to me. I was bound by a promise to take a ship to Russia; therefore I could not join in his venture. I was so cast down by the thought of his setting off without me that he comforted me by saying, 'Be of good cheer, Andrew. It is not once, but twice, that I must venture to Devon; and you and I shall be sailing comrades yet.'

"I had known John Becket also, and I used to hear him and Amos, even in those early days, talk of the rising spirit of liberty on both sides of the water, and of whether England or America would achieve it first. They sent messages back and forth across the sea through the years, each to tell the other how the cause in his land was faring. I have carried some of those letters and messages myself; although of late years John Becket had said no words and I have heard Amos wonder if he had forgotten us. When, therefore, the man of Devon sent him that warning, 'If he were coming at all he had best come quickly' Amos knew that the matter was of grave and pressing import. He was will-

ing to risk setting out to sea again, in the zeal of his great purpose.

"You must understand, David, that this quarrel between the colonies and England is not because King George, or his Prime Minister, or the English people bear a grudge against their brothers across the sea. It is because of the Boards of Trade, the Lords of the Admiralty, the Councils and Commissions, who pile edict upon edict, order upon order, to the end that the trade of the colonies should serve the prosperity of England and that alone. From old habit, that kingdom across the sea has suffered such men to carry on the business of its government, men who have forgotten that there is such a thing as liberty.

"'If laws will not bind these obstinate colonials, then we must use a show of force,' these elderly councilors have told each other. That they will set our country aflame by such action is a thing they do not see. But nothing amongst them can be done directly, or without a hundred documents and a thousand yards of red tape and unnumbered pounds of scarlet seals. They know, moreover, that the English people are weary of wars and are in sympathy with the spirit of America as long as there is not open rebellion; so they do not deem it wise to act too openly. They send word to John Becket,

an ironmaster of Devon, to set his furnaces to work at the casting of guns. It is no small task to make so many, but there is abundance of time, so think our noble lords. A certain number are to be ready this year, a certain number next year. The wars on the Continent have destroyed much of the British artillery, and have proven more of it to be old-fashioned. And these guns are of the sort to be carried on a far sea voyage and must be fitted for moving quickly over the lands of an insubordinate people.

" They say to John Becket, ' Set your men to this labor, and when the guns are finished, a certain high personage will buy them from you.' It would never do to order weapons directly, for the attack upon the colonies. So John Becket, shrewdly surmising the purpose of the work but being an obedient subject of King George, fires his furnaces and begins casting his metal. Yet he finds time, just the same, to send a message in haste across the sea. And when the year is ended and some one of authority comes to claim the guns — behold, they are gone.

" ' A certain Yankee trader came into port and offered me a greater price for my wares than did you,' says honest John Becket, ' so I have sold them and he has carried them away.' There was no contract, no promise; John Becket is within his rights.

He can even show the gold which he has received, to prove that it was a genuine purchase. So King George can look in vain for his guns."

"And did the Yankee trader — did my father — purpose bringing the guns to America?" asked David breathlessly.

"It is in my mind that he carried them only so far as mid-ocean and hove them over into the sea. He would have thought, as I understand Amos Dennison, that to carry them into Massachusetts would have brought on strife, and there was still hope that the quarrel might be settled peaceably. Lest he should come home with no cargo, and folk should be asking questions concerning his errand, he laid his homeward course by the West Indies and thought to bring in a shipload of sugar to cover the real purpose of his going. John Becket said well when he spoke of the greatness of the power of trade. Had the guns been carried away by force of arms, it would have been war or piracy, and the British Admiralty would have been hot on the heels of the offender. But as it is the Lords of Trade can only blink and wonder; not yet can they bring themselves to act in the open."

He was silent for a moment and then declared solemnly:

"It is my belief that Amos Dennison's strength

did not withstand the hardships of that voyage. The thought is strong within me that he had died, and was buried at sea, before ever the West India hurricane made an end of his ship. In going to sea upon this errand which so possessed him, he risked his life and gave it."

David stared across at him with wide eyes. Such a thought had not crossed his mind, since he had not known how broken the health of his father really was. Since none had come back to tell the tale, there would be no way that he could ever know.

Andrew Bardwell, after one long look of deep understanding, turned the talk to other matters.

"And now we have news, as I was always sure we would, that John Becket's furnaces, and others beside, are all ablaze again, busy with a task of which the people of England are not to know. Once more is there a chance for some clever Yankee with a stout ship and a long purse to lie off the coast of Devon and go amarketing for strange wares."

"But who will go, now that my father cannot?" David asked.

"Even Amos Dennison's nearest friend, one who is not half the man that he was, but who will do his best none the less." Andrew Bardwell spoke as though the decision were a mere matter of course.

"When will it be? Are you to sail soon?" cried

David. His blood moved quicker and his breath came fast.

Andrew Bardwell smiled. "I have need of certain things," he admitted, "of men, of money and of a vessel. I am no merchant and shipowner, as was Amos. As it is a strange, mad undertaking at best, there are few men of property to whom I dare speak of it, and fewer still who would give of their means for such an enterprise. But I do not despair. My plan is to muster what money I can, buy a vessel, if only a small one, and take her, laden with such cargo as I can afford, to the West Indies. There, if I traffic with the French and Spanish ports in the risky but profitable trade, my little venture should grow to be a greater one, and I shall, in my small way, be able to bid against King George. What think you of that plan, David?"

What David thought was plainly visible in the blaze of excitement that lit his face. The fire which had run through him as he heard his father's story now flared up in high possession of his whole being. He reached forward quickly and drew toward him the box of gold pieces which, so far, had lain unheeded upon the desk.

"Will you take my father's money?" he said. His voice shook although he tried so fiercely to steady it. "And will you take me?"

"I would not have you plunge so blindly into any undertaking," returned Andrew Bardwell. "Until this night, you had never seen me, or heard my name spoken. And yet, before morning, you would give me all you have, and would go away with me. Is that true wisdom, think you?"

"I care not for wisdom," the boy answered, choking. "Do not jest with me. My father lost his life in the pursuit of a certain purpose; have I not the right to follow him?"

But Andrew Bardwell temporized further. "When Amos and I sat here talking of the voyage, I said to him, 'Do you know that if the real object of your journey were ever known, you would be hanged as an enemy of the Government and King George?' And I say the same to you, David."

"And what did my father answer?" the boy demanded.

"He said that he liked the expedition rather the better for that; since it made him feel less of a merchant and more of a true adventurer again."

"Then that is what I say also," returned David. "A merchant — what is there of the merchant in me? Oh, do not quibble and hesitate, I cannot endure it. Say you will take me. When do you go?"

"I have almost a sufficient number of trustworthy men," said Andrew Bardwell. "I have perhaps

half enough money; and I have my eye upon a vessel. She is only a small one; but a ship like that on which Amos sailed we cannot hope for. This is no mighty adventure; only a single effort to help our country, and a perilous one. Wait, David, and think again."

"I will not wait," he answered. "This money will go a little toward making up the second half of what you need."

He emptied the box and pushed the heap of gold across the desk. He slipped the drawer into its place and saw it disappear with the same, soft click of its opening.

The boy had mastered his excitement now, but not his determination. "I think that for my father's sake you should take the gold and me," he said.

Andrew Bardwell got up from his chair, his resistance at an end. "With all my heart," he answered, "I will take the money and I will take you and Amos Dennison's spirit with you."

He took up the gold coins, handful by handful, and dropped them into the pockets of his rough coat.

"You shall hear from me perhaps in two months, at most in three," he said. "Until all is ready, it were best you should not know too much of what is afoot. It will be easier for you, should you be ques-

tioned. Good-by to you. As I have said before, David, you are your father's own son."

He opened the door and went out into the rain. David watched him pass down the brief tunnel of light, where flashing drops fell slanting down out of the darkness. In a moment the broad figure had disappeared into the black shadows of the garden, leaving the boy standing alone on the threshold. A few hours ago he had never seen Andrew Bardwell and had never heard of him. The stranger had come out of the dark with a fantastic and unbelievable tale, and he had gone back into it, bearing David's substance away with him.

"What have I done?" the boy was thinking, as he turned to take up the candle. "What is it I have done?"

Yet he smiled to himself, a smile of genuine content, as he closed and locked the door.

CHAPTER III

THE *SANTA MARIA*

A month passed, two months, three, and David had heard no word from Andrew Bardwell. With the boy's small patrimony stowed away in his bulging pockets, he seemed to have departed into oblivion, leaving no trace behind him. Two things only occurred in the course of the summer that served to remind David that the strange evening in the garden house had not been a passing dream.

One was simple enough, the advent of a new clerk in the countingroom where David worked for Robert Pierce. The newcomer was probably three years older than himself, taller, very thin and with a pale, intense face.

"Anthony Churchill," so Master Pierce had introduced him to the others, as he assigned him to one of the high desks by the window. "He has come to work with us only for a short time, during this busiest portion of the shipping season."

David heard the word go about that the young man was a student at Harvard College and was employing his vacation at this extra work in the

countinghouse of Robert Pierce, who was his distant relative. But the moment that he laid eyes upon his fellow clerk, the boy remembered that he had seen that face before, whiter even than it was now, and impassive, lying against the shoulder of a rough-clad seaman. Whatever mark was left by the blow that had knocked young Churchill senseless that night was now hidden by his black hair. There was, however, a significance in the fact that his left hand was still tied up in splints.

"Two of my fingers were broken in a clumsy accident," he had said in David's hearing, when somebody made mention of the bandaged hand. Had not David seen that very accident, the heavy down-treading of a big sea boot?

Anthony Churchill proved himself a quick and intelligent worker, getting through the tasks of the day with more accuracy and dispatch than did many of the others. This was in spite of the fact that he often spent long minutes staring out of the window at the shipping in the harbor below, laid out at the foot of the hill in a vivid panorama of blue, dancing water, towering masts, black and gray hulls of every model, and spreading sails of every size and shape. David saw, also, that Anthony Churchill's penetrating black eyes often sought him out. He sometimes felt them resting upon him when his own eyes

were busy with the work before him. Although the two exchanged little more talk than the business of the countingroom demanded, David began to feel a growing admiration for the eager spirit that so evidently dwelt behind that clean-cut face.

"You spend too much candlelight on those French philosophers that all the young men are reading nowadays," David heard Master Pierce say reprovingly one day to his younger kinsman. It was late afternoon, and the long room was so nearly empty that the two were having a moment of personal talk. "Bend your wits to the understanding of these new customs duties, and the orders concerning colonial ships. It should keep the whole of your mind busy to follow the commands of the English Lords of Trade, and leave no time for reflection on the Rights of Man of which you talk so often. Dangerous doctrine, dangerous doctrine, Anthony!"

"But when I see the prosperity of every seaport choked and smothered by those same commands," burst out Anthony, "it is then that I think most on the Rights of Man. The English people know something of freedom and presently they will know more. But what of those sleepy, wigged Councils and Ministers and Under-under Secretaries of this and that, who yawn and blink and sign their red-

sealed documents and nod again! There is only one thing that will awake them to the true matters of life, and that is the sound of guns."

"Hush, hush," cried the staid old merchant in horror. "That is no talk for my peaceful countinghouse."

But Anthony refused to be silenced.

"They seek to bind our trade with their by-laws and orders, and they can never understand that trade is a live thing and cannot be bound. They may as well hope to hold the trade wind in the hollow of their hands. It is only in the hollow of a sail that the trade wind can be held. When it cannot carry you to one place, it carries you to another. But these dusty old gentlemen in London, sitting about their council tables, think that they have made the wind cease blowing, when they have merely stopped a keyhole!"

Robert Pierce made as if to answer, then shook his head in despair and hurried out of the room, closing the door quickly behind him. Anthony Churchill stood in the fading light of the long window, his face looking so drawn and unhappy that David moved over from his desk to venture a comforting word.

"I think Master Pierce went away so quickly because he would have agreed with you had he stayed."

"Yes," returned Anthony, "it is so with all of them; they will not listen to new ideas, hoping that they will not have to fall in with them, and that things can stay as they always were. And all the time we come nearer and nearer to the breaking point, while scarcely any one makes preparations, save in talk. Andrew Bardwell says —"

He stopped abruptly, closed his big ledger, carried it away to its shelf and went out of the room without another word. Thereafter, as David noticed, Anthony Churchill avoided his company, not, apparently from any ill-fellowship, but perhaps from the fear that he would let slip more than he meant to say. But as the two eyed each other across the rows of desks, David felt that there was an understanding between them, a common project to which they were both committed.

Aunt Candace, thin, faded, with tight gray curls and a ready tongue, had a bosom friend, Mistress Mehitabel Harris, older, more faded, and with a volubility of speech to which Aunt Candace's compared as the rushing of a river rivals the unceasing tide of the sea. The more ancient lady lived at Benton, a tiny seaport about twenty miles to the northward, where she was visited at conscientious intervals by Mistress Candace Dennison. And since Aunt Candace professed herself timid about traveling

alone that great distance by the coach, she usually insisted upon the escort of her nephew. These visits were not, to tell the truth, as dreadful an ordeal for David as might have been expected; for with her grandmother, there dwelt Janet Harris, a clear-eyed, high-spirited young person who was David's one girl friend.

Had the boy's knowledge of womenfolk gone no farther than Aunt Candace and old Anna in the kitchen, his education would have been meager indeed; but, ever since the time when he was a small boy, he had been blessed with acquaintance with Janet's alert mind and vigorous habits of speech. For feminine charms in general he had no taste at all, and fled from the rustle of a petticoat in undignified terror. Janet had recently developed from a long-legged pony of a half-grown girl into a reluctantly sedate miss with flowered overskirts and high-piled hair. Of this fact, however, David's obtuse wits were as yet scarcely conscious.

Aunt Candace had appointed the time for a visit to Benton in July, when David had a few days free from the countinghouse for a midsummer holiday. It was a hot and dusty journey by the creaking coach and it was pleasant, at the end of it, to be welcomed by Janet in the porch of Mistress Mehitabel's white cottage, and to be ushered into the dim

coolness of the shuttered parlor. The rose and gray parrot was screaming a welcome from his perch by the window, and the cat, lying on the brick hearth with its paws tucked under its chest, scowled at David as he came in. It was a very old cat and had never liked boys. Aunt Candace and her friend were at once swept away on a flood of simultaneous conversation, giving David and Janet opportunity to talk in privacy of their own affairs. Such a visit always began with Janet's surveying him keenly and speaking her mind without hesitation.

"David," she declared, "you are different. Something has happened to you. What is it?"

"Nothing," returned he with such energy that the cat jumped up and even the two old ladies almost paused for a breath in their talk.

She shook her head obstinately.

"Something has changed you," she insisted, under cover of Aunt Candace's and Mistress Mehitabel's renewed avalanche of speech.

"But you yourself, Janet," said David, "you have done something to make you look older, somehow."

Janet sighed. She had put on her newest sprigged muslin gown for David's visit, and was a very goodly sight with her fresh color, her bright eyes, and her dark hair done high. All of this was quite

unnoted by David's blind eyes. Janet seemed to take little pleasure in her mature finery and to share David's evident regret that her romping days were gone.

"Granny says that it is time that I behaved and dressed with more dignity," she said ruefully. "I am almost as old as you, David, and I am to be mistress of the little school down on the point when the autumn term begins."

"Why, you were a pupil at the Dame school yourself, only a year ago!" returned David. "Will you like being a schoolmistress, do you believe? Do you think that you can sit still through the whole of the day's session?"

"I can try," she answered. "Sometimes I wonder whether I shall be able to birch the big boys when they are saucy to me. There are some great, stupid ones, older and bigger than I, who sit in a row on the back bench and do not mind their lessons. But the schoolhouse is near the rocks and the water, so that, when the droning of the children drives me out of my wits, I can look out and see the ships passing. A big ship, going so calm and stately down to the sea, always makes me feel like a different person, a much better and steadier one. I am not very steady, David?"

"No," he agreed readily, "you are not. But you

will make a good schoolmistress, just the same. And if any of the boys need birching, I will do it for you. They shall not be saucy to you."

"Granny says also," Janet continued, "that it is not becoming for me to go down alone to see the ships building as I used to do. But you will take me there, this afternoon, will you not, David? You will like the new schooner that old Peleg Durfee has almost finished. She has lines like a sea gull."

David drew a breath of relief that the subject of the change in him should have been so easily set aside. He had known, himself, that he was different, that he had never been the same since the spirit of adventure had been kindled within him by his talk with Andrew Bardwell. He had not realized that it would be so evident to Janet's clear eyes; no one in the countingroom had noted any change. He saw daily visions, above his ledgers and shipping invoices, of restless seas, of ships lying in tropical harbors of opal-colored water. It was in such ports that the small fortune was to be turned into a great one, and the great one turned to his country's need. Thus he dreamed on, although in many weeks there had come no message from Andrew Bardwell. He was nervous now, under Janet's scrutiny, and was glad, when they sat down to dinner, that Mistress Mehitabel's torrent of talk

chanced to flow his way and drowned all further questioning.

The second attraction that Benton held for David was Peleg Durfee's shipyard at the edge of the little harbor. Since the time when he and Janet were small children they had loved to go there to watch the keels of the new vessels being laid, to see the stout oak ribs set in place, and to watch the beautiful lines of the ship grow up under the busy hammers. Peleg Durfee was a shrewd, crafty old soul, unpopular amongst the townsmen and criticized and grumbled at by all of his workmen. Yet the stanchness of the ships he built made the same men work for him year after year, brought the same masters and merchants back to order new vessels from him, and made Janet and David consider his yard and dock the most interesting place in the world.

"What is the name of the new schooner?" asked David, as he and Janet, following their old habit, went down the hill, after dinner, to the harbor's edge.

"The *Santa Maria*," answered Janet, "and, so the men are saying, the best vessel that has been built in Peleg Durfee's yards in many years."

"The *Santa Maria?*" repeated David. "That is a strange, papist name for a good New England vessel."

"There has been some odd story about her; but I have not understood it, or heard the whole of it. Now that you have come, perhaps we can find out more about her. There she lies, at the rigging dock. They had a difficult time at her launching. She is said to be unlucky."

Many an old acquaintance greeted David as he passed along among the shipwrights. There were grins and nods and smothered chuckles at his questions concerning the *Santa Maria;* and it was with little difficulty that he got together the whole story. Peleg Durfee's parsimony and craftiness had grown too great in his old age and had well-nigh brought him to ruin. A Spanish merchant, drifting into Boston from the West Indies, had heard of the stanch vessels of Benton, and had asked Durfee to build him this schooner for island-to-island trade among the Antilles.

"We do not like to build for foreigners and papists," said one old calker to David, punctuating his words with vigorous blows of his mallet, "but Peleg would build a ship for the devil himself, if he was sure that his money was good. He never spares on the timbers and the workmanship; but he shaved so close on other things that he overreached himself at last. It was all along of his being too stingy to buy a new almanac that he spoiled the

luck of the best vessel he and I have ever built."

It seemed that old Durfee had thought he could calculate the days of the month from a year-old almanac and had unwittingly begun laying the keel of the new vessel on the thirteenth day of December. That, it was said, had been the cause of much ill fortune from the first; there had been accidents and injuries and delays beyond anything before experienced. On the day of the launching, the *Santa Maria* had stuck on the ways — "It was because Peleg Durfee was even too stingy to use enough tallow," the old calker told them — and after such a misfortune the men had threatened to refuse to work upon her further. There was no need, however, for their refusal; since word came in by a ship from the Caribbean that the old Spanish merchant was dead of the plague at Carthagena and would have no need for his American-built vessel.

"I thought," said David, "that it was against the law to build a ship except for American and English trade."

"King George forbids it," the old workman answered, "but Peleg Durfee says that King George does not make it worth a poor man's while to remember all his laws."

Unfortunately, King George and his courts of justice could not be asked to press any possible claim

against the dead Spaniard's estate; therefore Peleg Durfee, with most of his ready money involved in the *Santa Maria,* was near to bankruptcy. With her outlandish name and her reputation for ill fortune, no owner would have her; nor could any sailor within five ports have been found who would ship in her.

"Such a vessel puts to sea and is never heard of again," was the comment of one laborer wise in the superstitions of seafaring life. "Her name stands in her way; but it would be worse yet to give her another. Of all unlucky things, the worst luck of all is to change a vessel's name."

So it seemed that the *Santa Maria,* together with Peleg Durfee's prosperity, might go to pieces at the wharf; but a purchaser for the ship of ill chance had been found at last, and work was once more going forward. David and Janet, having gathered up the whole story, went down upon the dock to see the heroine of the tale of ill luck, to admire the lift of her bows and the clean lines of her hull. The wise old Spaniard and Peleg Durfee between them had designed a seaworthy vessel, so all the men agreed, who were toiling upon her now, scraping her masts and spars and getting in place the white, new cordage of her rigging.

"I should like to make a voyage in her," David

declared idly; but a rigger who overheard him shook his head and said darkly:

"Don't you wish such a thing, Master David; for she will never come back from her first voyage. We all wonder what man was foolhardy enough to buy her."

The two spent as pleasant a time as of old, watching the work go forward in the busy shipyard, where the music of the hammers and the smell of the new lumber and the friendliness of all the workmen were as delightful as they had always been. Late in the afternoon, as they climbed the path toward home, David asked, with only careless curiosity:

"Does any one know who it was who dared to buy the *Santa Maria?*"

"I think," returned Janet, "that not many people know. But the little boy who weeds our garden said that the buyer lodged at his mother's house while he was bargaining with Peleg Durfee. It was some one of whom he had never heard here before, a sea captain called Andrew Bardwell. Look, David," she added, "there is my schoolhouse at the head of the path. Would you not like to come there to have me teach you the alphabet?"

It was fortunate that her attention was elsewhere; for if she had noticed a change in David before, she would have seen another and more star-

tling one now. But he contrived to master himself and to answer fairly steadily:

"I fear you would not find me a very quick pupil, Janet." Then, as he became more able to speak calmly, he added, "I think I should like to walk down upon the point and see the *Santa Maria* once more from above."

In the light of this new knowledge, that she was the vessel upon which Andrew Bardwell was to launch the great venture, he felt he must look at her once again.

Janet hesitated.

"It is beginning to grow dark," she said, "and Granny will be looking for me to put the scones in the oven. You go down to the point by yourself, David, but be sure to come in to supper before long."

She went away toward the cottage and David took his way along the crooked path between great bowlders that strewed the rocky backbone of the headland. The sun was dropping, but cast a last mellow light upon the *Santa Maria* lying below him, fresh and beautiful, with her new planking and her clean rigging. He stood looking at her for longer than Janet would have approved. So this was the ship that was to carry out his father's lost endeavor!

A voice behind him startled him, a cracked voice,

but one speaking in the mildest and most polite of tones.

"Can you tell me, good young sir, who is the owner of that fair ship?" it asked.

He was startled at the thought that any one could have come so softly along the path that he had heard no footsteps. The man whom he saw when he turned was, however, no very strange being, only a thin person with bent shoulders, dressed in a shabby coat and knee breeches of dark color, suitable to the station of a clerk or shopkeeper. For a moment David hesitated, not knowing how to reply.

"I think Peleg Durfee has told no one who bought her," he answered at length. "Even the men in the dockyard did not know."

"She is a goodly vessel," returned the other, "built of white oak, I hear, and copper bottomed, after the new fashion. It is almost as though she were equipped for a long voyage rather than for the coastwise trade. And, as you say, Peleg Durfee has told no one the name of her owner. Yet —" here his voice changed suddenly —"yet you know it."

David did not answer. He remembered how he had heard that cracked voice before, on that night in the garden house, crying out to Andrew Bard-

well. It had been choked and strangled then, but it was undoubtedly the same.

"Perhaps," the man went on, "you are of so secretive a nature that you will not even tell me your own name."

"I will not deny you that," said David, though his heart was beginning to beat quickly: "I am David Dennison."

"So?" said the other, whom he knew now to be Jethro Slee. "Is it even so?"

And, from under his neat and sober coat, he whipped a long knife and made a lunge at David. The boy ducked to one side with agility as swift as his own; and the blow grated on the rock behind. The man recovered, drew back and stood panting.

"I swore to have Amos Dennison's life," he cried, "and that was denied me. But his son's will serve my turn as well."

David's position seemed a well-nigh desperate one, for he stood at the outermost end of the high point, with nothing behind him but the great bowlder and a sheer fall down to the sea. But his alert eye noted, in spite of the failing light, that, while he stood upon the hard and stony path, his assailant had stepped back into the long grass and tangled blackberry vines. And when the strange man lifted his knife for another stabbing blow, the boy plunged

From under his neat and sober coat he whipped a long knife and made a lunge at David. Page 72.

forward and caught him about the knees. Jethro Slee sought to step aside, and regain his balance, but his foot caught in a wiry vine and over he went, his head cracking against a corner of rock and the knife flying out of his hand. It went sliding and clattering down over the stones and bowlders, and finally fell with a splash into the water below.

David leaned back against the rock and watched his adversary as he lay without moving for some minutes, then stirred faintly and at last, sitting up, began to feel frantically among the bushes and briars about him.

"There is no use in that," said David quietly; "your knife went over the cliff."

At that the other staggered to his feet and fled away across the rocky open, stopping now and then at a safe distance to hurl back at the boy the strangest and most terrible curses. The black clerkly coat was a mere travesty; only a sailor could have brought back such oaths, from the blackest ports in all the world. He seemed fearful of pursuit and yet reluctant to go, so that the last sight David caught of him was standing on the shoulder of a rock, still shouting his strange blasphemies and waving his long arms against the last faint light in the west.

"You are late, David," said Aunt Candace re-

proachfully, as the boy came at last into the lamp-lit dining room, where the two old ladies and the one fair young one sat about the polished table. Mistress Mehitabel was giving directions to her friend concerning a bonnet that was to be made for her by the milliner in Rogersport, so that little more was said of his tardiness. Janet smiled upon him, got up to bring in the scones which she had kept hot in the oven, and sat beside him while he ate with hearty appetite.

"Your sleeve is torn," she said presently.

He looked down and saw that the cloth of his coat was slit above the cuff, evidently by the point of Jethro Slee's long knife.

"The point is all overgrown with prickly blackberry vines," he answered. "These scones of yours are monstrous good, Janet."

CHAPTER IV

THE TALL BRIG

The visit came to its due end, and David returned to the countinghouse to dream over his ledgers more vividly than before. For now against the background of palms and shimmering waters he saw the outline of that trim schooner, the *Santa Maria.* Time passed without event, however, until the summer had begun to merge into gusty autumn. Then one day Anthony Churchill, passing his desk, laid a folded paper upon it and walked on without turning his head. David opened the message and read:

"Andrew Bardwell bids you meet him on the dock at Benton, on Thursday afternoon, at dusk."

Thursday was but two days away; and some explanation must be given to Aunt Candace for so sudden an expedition. By great good fortune her rheumatism prevented her offering to go with him to see her dear friend, Mistress Mehitabel. She contented herself with loading David down with packages and admonitions of every sort. It happened, luckily, that she had long wondered how to send the

new bonnet to Mistress Harris, and was overjoyed to make David her messenger.

"Be sure to dispatch your business quickly and do not come back by the night coach if it is raining. And do not let any one but yourself touch the bandbox."

David agreed; he would have consented to anything, so anxious was he to be off.

He felt, however, that he made a ridiculous figure as he stood waiting for the coach, with the flowered bandbox in one hand and a basket of jam pots in the other. As the coach rolled up he observed that Anthony Churchill was on the box beside the driver; but he saw his comrade of the countinghouse give him only a careless nod as, with his multitude of packages, he bestowed himself within.

There were two passengers already inside the coach. One of them was a tall, striking man in a plum-colored coat, with spotless white ruffles, and having a general air of prosperity. His keen, dark eyes took a rapid survey of David and his varied baggage; and as the coach jolted into motion again, he addressed the boy gravely.

"After an examination of yourself and your possessions, young gentleman," he said, "I conclude that we can expect but one thing. At the next crossroads, we will pick up a fluttering little person with

ruffled petticoats and a close bonnet, who is planning to run away with you. If such is the case, my traveling companion and I will betake ourselves to the roof of the coach. Far be it from us to intrude ourselves upon the sweet palpitations of an elopement. Or, if I can be of any service to you as witness, when the minister is found, you may readily call upon me. My neighbor, here, would be glad to hold the bandbox, I am sure, while you and the sweet young thing go in to be married. In a great crisis of life like this, one man is always glad to serve another."

David flushed. Then he looked up, met the other's glance of twinkling good humor, and laughed with him, in complete accord.

"My aunt," he explained, "has a friend in Benton who asked her to choose a new best bonnet. And neither of them would believe that the bandbox could travel safely by the postboy."

He could not go on to tell that, since he was deserting Aunt Candace for he knew not how long, he had not the heart to refuse the last request she would be able to make of him. Within his pocket there burned the letter to her, which he meant to leave with Janet. To Janet, it would be simple enough to say that he was going adventuring to foreign parts. She would not set up any clamor of

lamentations and questionings; she would accept the news simply, as became a sensible girl.

"We also are going to Benton," declared the tall man, "so that the best bonnet will have safe escort to its destination."

David looked up at him and smiled broadly. Although he did not know it, he had a most engaging smile, which showed so plainly his honest and ingenuous soul that every one who saw it desired at once to be his friend. The second traveler leaned forward and spoke for the first time.

"If you have friends in Benton," he remarked, "you have probably been there often. Have you heard any talk of a certain vessel called the *Santa Maria?*"

His tone was elaborately careless; but David could feel the tenseness that lay behind the question. The man himself contrasted oddly with the stranger in the plum-colored coat; for his dress was ill-kept and disordered, and his bold roving eyes were never quiet. He had the look of one who lives for excitement alone, with never a thought of higher things.

"I have seen the *Santa Maria,*" replied David briefly. "She is a schooner and beautifully built. She will stand the storms of any seas."

"So she should," said the other; whereat the

tall man frowned and began to talk of the farmhouses they were passing beside the way.

The road sometimes wound along through yellowing fields and woods, and sometimes came out along the rocky shore where the fresh, salt air came in from the sea. At one of these open reaches, they came in sight of a tall, white ship moving slowly across the level floor of the almost windless water. David had no very clear sight of her, but the second stranger, he of the dark, bold eyes, had apparently observed every detail in one quick glance.

"An armed brig," he said. "What could such a ship of war be doing here? Is there much coming and going from Benton harbor, so that His Majesty's vessels must lie off that port?"

"Very little," David told him. "There are no ships due to sail from there except for the —"

He was about to say, "except for the *Santa Maria,*" but checked himself in time. The man opposite smiled and did not press this question. More than once thereafter the ship came in sight again, making little headway in the light flaws of winds that touched the smooth water with streaks of darker blue. But no one made further comment upon her; and the three pursued their journey almost in silence.

The coach set them down at last at Benton, where

David with boxes and bags was put off at the foot of Mistress Mehitabel's lane. His own small effects were packed in a canvas hold-all which had seen more than one voyage with his father. The eyes of the man in the plum-colored coat moved quickly from the weather-worn bag to David's face.

"If it is true that you are not bent upon matrimony," he said, "my second guess would be that you are about to run away to sea."

At this, David blushed so hotly that the stranger said no more, and was carried away by the rumbling coach down the street toward the wharf.

The boy gathered up his effects and slowly climbed the steep lane to Mistress Mehitabel's house. Janet and her grandmother were both from home; so that the little maid ushered him into an empty parlor, where there was no one to greet him but the cat and the parrot. He sat down to wait beside the latticed window, and looked out across the little garden, past a field full of goldenrod and wild asters to the blue of the harbor. The still, sunny autumn afternoon was drawing to a close, with a quiet peace lying over everything. When, he wondered, was he to see all this again? An hour passed and Janet did not come. He must write her a note, he decided, and moved over to the desk in the corner.

"Dear Janet," he began, "I am going away on a

He could see the Santa Maria, *completely rigged now, and lying at anchor beyond the wharf.* *Page 81.*

long sea voyage; whither, and for what purpose, I may not tell you. With this letter, I am leaving one for Aunt Candace; will you send it to her? And when you see her, will you try to make her believe that I am safe, even though I have gone to sea? My errand is a very great one. It is that upon which my father had gone before me."

The quill pen ceased scratching, the sunlight and the shadows of the dancing vine leaves came in upon the paper. How was he to say good-by to Janet? He did not know and in the end merely wrote at the foot of the page:

"Good-by to you, David."

He arose, took up his canvas bag and went out. The shadows were long upon the garden walk; but the same still peacefulness lay everywhere. He was to think of it many times as he tossed upon stormy seas beyond the edge of the world.

He walked along the path which he and Janet had so often followed as they went down to the shipyard. He could see the *Santa Maria,* completely rigged now, and lying at anchor beyond the wharf. A boat came out from under the shadow of her bulwarks and rowed toward shore. The shipyard was silent, for the laborers had ceased work for the day; but beyond it, where the wharf ran out into the lapping tide, a group of men were gathering.

Here was Anthony Churchill pacing restlessly up and down at the end of the dock; here was the stranger in the plum-colored coat giving orders to a seaman as to the disposal of a green sea chest. His other traveling companion of the coach sat on a coil of rope, watching the *Santa Maria* as she rocked in the ripples of the tide. Dusk was falling in the narrow street that led down to the wharf; yet, when a broad-shouldered figure came tramping over the cobbles, David could not fail to recognize it as Andrew Bardwell.

"I knew you would not fail me, David," he said, as he came near, "even though I disappeared so completely from your sight for these last, long months. Have you seen the schooner that your money has helped to buy? She is a staunch vessel, the *Santa Maria,* for all she is a small one!"

"I went on board her before she was finished," answered David. "She is as good a boat as Peleg Durfee ever built. Were you not afraid of her, as being unlucky?"

"Sailors often believe that bad luck changes with a change of owners, and we mean to make it so. She will have ample chance to prove that old Peleg is a good shipbuilder even though he does lay his keels by dead reckoning."

They had come out on the wharf together and

were approaching the group of men waiting at the far end of it.

"Yonder are your shipmates," went on Andrew Bardwell. "Anthony Churchill, of the broken head, you already know. That is Hugh Darrow sitting on the coil of rope, a strange, reckless and unwise fellow, but a faithful one. And that tall man in the fine coat is Master James Babcock of Boston town."

"I talked with him as we came down in the coach," said David. "He made great game of me, but I — I liked him, somehow, from the first minute."

"He makes game of all things," returned his friend, "and he is the bravest man that ever lived. Master Babcock," he continued, as the stranger in the plum-colored coat came to meet them, "I have not yet told you that we are to have a son of Amos Dennison with us."

The old-fashioned title of "Master" was giving place in New England to the newer one of "Mr."; and only certain persons of special worth and dignity were still addressed in the more ancient fashion. The gentleman in the plum-colored coat was of such a bearing that the title "Master" belonged to him as by natural right.

James Babcock smiled down at David. "Your

father," he said, "was my very great friend, young sir. To think that I rallied you as being a blushing bridegroom; when all the time there was bound up in your heart the same dream of high adventure that possesses all of us. Have you the ship's papers, Captain Bardwell, and is all ready for our immediate sailing?"

"Everything is done, save to get this last of our gear on board," replied Andrew Bardwell. "The tide sets seaward before sunrise; and with it we will go down the harbor."

There was a great heap of bales and boxes still to be put aboard; so that all hands fell immediately to work to accomplish the task. David and Hugh Darrow each pulled an oar in one of the boats that plied back and forth between the schooner and the shore. Master Babcock superintended the lading at the wharf; while Anthony Churchill helped to direct the bestowal of the goods on board. Night fell; the water and the sky grew dark; and the tall masts and rigging of the *Santa Maria* stood out in silhouette against thick-sprinkled stars. The black waves slapped and gurgled against the piles of the wharf as the boat came again and yet again against the landing stairs.

"You are wanted here above, Master David," said James Babcock at last. As David came climb-

ing up to the level of the wharf, he saw a figure in a flying cloak standing beside Master Babcock. It was Janet, white-faced in the dark, and with her voice trembling when she spoke to him.

"I could not let you go, David, without a word of farewell," she said, "so I ran down the hill while Granny was napping. Are you — are you sure that you must go, and that you will come back safely?"

They walked a little apart, she striving to still her panting breath, he attempting to speak calmly.

"I will surely come back, though I do not know where the voyage will take us, nor how long it may be," he said. "And — and I will never forget you, Janet."

They stood for a moment, neither knowing quite what to say. Janet drew a deep breath that was like a sob, and then spoke steadily.

"Wherever you are going, I know it is on a brave errand," she said. "And I will remember you every day, David, though you are gone ten years."

She gave him her cold hand in quick pressure, and vanished into the dark.

"That was a brave lass," said Master Babcock, "to come through the black night to wish us good luck upon our voyaging. We will have need of all that she can wish us, before we have gone far.

And it is worth much, David, though doubtless in your youthful carelessness, you do not know it, to have such a maid to come back to, when the long journey is at an end."

It was hard on midnight when the final trip was made and they all came aboard the *Santa Maria*. As David was helping to hoist the boat, he heard Andrew Bardwell and Master Babcock talking together close by. They were discussing the armed brig which David and James Babcock had seen from the coach, and of which Captain Bardwell had also had tidings.

"She has not come into the harbor, and is lying off the point," said Andrew Bardwell. "Yet her captain has ventured close in through the rocks and shoals. He has evidently some definite purpose; but what is it?" He went on after a moment of thought, "I think their desire is only to rob us of some of our seamen; for the British ships have been impressing a great number of men lately. The crews on His Majesty's vessels must need to be filled up."

"It is an excellent way," observed Master Babcock dryly, "to obtain loyal recruits. I have seen them come into the Customs House and carry away the revenue officers, under pretense that they were deserters from some ship of war. These captains

are able and just men, themselves; but they are obeying short-sighted orders from some of those Boards and Councils which we so little love. But might it not be better, since our papers are in order and our cargo contains, so far, no contraband, to let the King's officers come aboard and satisfy themselves that all is as it should be?"

"No," answered Andrew Bardwell, "we can brook no inquiry or delay at this moment of sailing. And there is at least one man on board who was once bludgeoned into the King's service and who left it under such circumstances that he would easily be remembered and recognized. They shall never take him back; but this is no moment to offer resistance in that matter."

The boat swung into its place; and the two moved away across the deck.

"Four hours more and the tide will serve our departure," was the last thing that David heard Andrew Bardwell say.

He had thought that he could not sleep; what with the excitement of the hour and the unaccustomed sound of the water gurgling outside the oaken planks so close to his ear. But his eyes closed the moment after he had lain down in his bunk; and he was aroused, only after some hours, by the sound of many hurrying footsteps just above his head.

When he came on deck he saw that the blackness of night had been replaced by the shimmering pearl-gray of early morning, and that a blanket of fog lay so thick everywhere that the bow of the *Santa Maria* was invisible from the stern. He could see, dimly, that Andrew Bardwell and the first mate, a heavy, broad man, named George Willets, were in earnest consultation beside the rail. The captain beckoned David to come close.

"Your young ears are quicker than mine," he said. "Harken and tell me what you hear."

David listened intently for a moment.

"I hear the sound of oars," he said, "rowing very softly, and coming in from the sea."

Andrew Bardwell nodded.

"They are hoping to take us unawares."

He gave orders in an undertone, that the mainsail should be raised and that the *Santa Maria* should get under way. Very silently and cautiously the great sail was spread, although the windless morning did not afford sufficient breeze to fill it. It went aloft almost without noise, but, at the very last, the whine and clatter of a block betrayed what was afoot. Immediately there came a voice through the fog.

"*Santa Maria,* ahoy," it shouted.

The call was a thin, quavering one, with a tone

that sounded familiar in David's ear. It seemed to be the voice of Jethro Slee; and so small and faint was it as to be nearly lost in the muffling fog. Almost immediately it was followed by a hail from a lustier throat.

"*Santa Maria,* ahoy," came the call again.

If Captain Bardwell heard, he made no sign other than to give a low-voiced order to the mate. Noiselessly, the schooner slipped her moorings and went drifting down the harbor with the tide. The dip of the oars went out of hearing astern, although one last hail came sounding through the fog. Another boat could still be heard coming up the channel toward them.

"I hope we do not run them down in the mist," said James Babcock, who had come on deck and joined the group at the rail.

"They will keep free of the tide race," answered Captain Bardwell, "and that is swift enough to carry us clear, even without a wind. I fished and swam in Benton Harbor when I was a boy; and I know every reef and current even beyond the point. That is more than does the captain of yonder brig. Ben Turner, who watched him from the shore yesterday, says it was plain he had no coastwise pilot on board. We will give him a pleasant chase when the wind gets up, and the fog clears."

They had passed the second boat, and now, by a black shadow looming through the fog, knew they had reached the point, at the mouth of the harbor. It was a crooked way, to be felt blindfold along the rock-strewn channel; but Andrew Bardwell took his ship through it with unfaltering confidence. As they came well clear of the bay, the morning wind met them suddenly, blowing away the fog, and filling, one after another, the white sails that went up on the *Santa Maria.*

David, looking back, could see the harbor, freed of mist now, but with the water still, smooth and glittering, like a round bowl of quicksilver. Yonder, close to the rocky point, lay the brig. She had narrow, tall sails that rose so high that the royals were still half hidden in the lifting fog. The wind had not yet caught her, and the drenched canvas hung limp in the first sunlight. But, even as David watched her, the curves of the sails filled out, the ship heeled over, and she came, rocking and dipping, out into the channel in pursuit.

"Boom!" One of her cannon spoke with a crashing voice, that rolled out over the water and thundered back from the rocky headland.

CHAPTER V

THE WINGED HORSE

A great cloud of sea birds went whirling up from the rocky point, at the roar of the gun. But they, it seemed, were the only creatures to take notice of the challenging voice of the brig; for the *Santa Maria* fled away upon her course without giving a moment's heed to the summons. Although Andrew Bardwell could have had no very great experience with the sailing powers of the schooner, he seemed content to risk the safety of his voyage upon a race with the King's brig. He was within range at the first shot, but the English gunner's aim went wild. By the second he was out of reach.

"That ship's captain has more in his mind than the mere stealing of one or two of our seamen," observed James Babcock. "And with his English-born tenacity, he is like to follow us all the way to the West Indies. Perhaps the secret of our errand has got abroad. Some one has whispered it to a friend, or babbled it in a tavern; and the news has gone straight to the ears that should least have heard it."

Andrew Bardwell, who stood beside him, shook his head.

"Not one of those who knew our purpose but is as faithful as you or I," he answered. "None could have told who did not know."

"Yet certain it is that there has been treachery," insisted James Babcock. "The question is — has the traitor gone to sea with them, or with us?" As Andrew Bardwell walked away to give an order, he continued reflectively to David, "I should like to know just which man it is of whom Captain Bardwell spoke, when he said we had one among us who had taken his own leave of the King's Navy."

David, to whom he was talking, did not reply. His mind had gone back to that evening in the garden house when Andrew Bardwell had given him a glimpse of the depths to which he had fallen before Amos Dennison had raised him up again. In his own heart he had no doubt that it was Andrew Bardwell himself who had been carried away by the King's officers. Was it this alone, he wondered, that made the English captain so determined in his pursuit of them? Or did he have some further knowledge of the mission upon which they were bound?

He thought of that voice which had hailed them through the fog. Was it really Jethro Slee's and

was he the traitor? But how could even he have known a secret so jealously guarded? David was not sure enough of his guess to speak of it.

"At least we can be certain," Master Babcock was saying, "that even if that brig does set out to follow us as far as the Spanish Main, Andrew Bardwell will contrive to give her the slip on the broad, blue playground of the Atlantic Ocean."

By order of the Spaniard, the *Santa Maria* had been rigged without topmasts, as was the fashion for many of the coastwise schooners of that day. Andrew Bardwell had made no change in these specifications; so that the schooner had a smaller spread of canvas than the brig. In the difficult maneuvers of passing the hazardous waters that surrounded Benton Harbor, she was, however, a far handier craft than the square-sailed man-of-war. The distance between them grew greater and greater as the *Santa Maria* stood out to sea in the freshening wind. She was well down over the horizon before the brig was fairly free of the rocks and shoals; and by midmorning she had got so completely away that the peril of pursuit seemed at an end.

"But I think that captain will not give us up so easily," David heard Master Babcock say to Andrew Bardwell, to which the other replied:

"No, he has not done with us yet."

The voyage was now fairly begun; and seamen and officers were beginning to make acquaintance with one another's ways. Master Babcock was to be supercargo; while David was to be his clerk, yet was to lend a hand with the sails when necessary and was, whenever there was opportunity, to work with Captain Bardwell and the mate at the study of navigation.

"I owe it to your father's son," the captain said, "to make a master of you some day."

George Willets, as has been said, was the first mate, while Anthony Churchill, who had been to sea before, was to be the second. Amongst the sailors in the forecastle, there were, besides Hugh Darrow, various seamen who had sailed with Andrew Bardwell before, and who swore that he was the best master on all the seven seas.

"Saving only your father, Master David!" said Ben Turner, the oldest of them, who had shipped with Amos Dennison. "I would I had been with him on that last voyage. A man might well be proud to go down with Captain Dennison."

Their course, so far as David understood it, was not the directly southward one that would take them to the West Indies. He watched Andrew Bardwell prick out their position on the chart and wondered

whither they were going. It was not the part of the supercargo's clerk to ask too many questions, even though he felt he had so good a friend in Captain Bardwell.

The *Santa Maria,* like every vessel that was to sail into the pirate-haunted waters of the Caribbean, was equipped with guns,— a long one, swivel-mounted, in her bows, and two smaller at the stern. Her quarters below, besides being new and clean, were comfortable, if extremely narrow. In the space aft were two tiny cabins, one for Andrew Bardwell and one for James Babcock. In the more open gallery were bunks for the two mates, and for the clerk, David. The cabin boy was a black-eyed imp of a lad named Nat Christy. David's duties with Master Babcock were, so far, light ones; so that he spent much of his time on deck, either struggling with observations and nautical instruments, or learning seamanship from the sailors in every way he could.

He loved to keep a lookout in the crow's-nest with Hugh Darrow, whose eyes were the keenest of any man's on board, and whose tales of past voyages wiled away many an hour of watching. He seemed to have been everywhere, to have tried everything and to have gathered up nothing but a restless craving for new places and new adventures. Some of his

stories were strangely ugly ones, which David wondered that he could repeat. The man seemed never to have known either terror or weariness, and always to be looking forward to fresh hazards of his life's fortune.

As he finally explained to David, he was the son of an English army officer, a man who had distinguished himself in the field, but who found a brief period of peace too much for his ill-controlled spirit, so that he committed a crime for which he was not only expelled from his regiment, but sentenced to transportation to the royal colony of Georgia. Hugh's mother had refused to leave England, and the boy had with equal firmness refused to leave his father. Father and son had gone out to America together when Hugh was fourteen, and the elder Darrow had died in two years, leaving the boy penniless and without friends. He had made his way to Charleston and had shipped before the mast, thus beginning that ten years of roving adventure that seemed to have taken him to well-nigh every port in the world. He had first known Andrew Bardwell in Lisbon, and had encountered him here and there in those chance meetings that occur in a sailor's life. He had seen the most of him when his own ship and Captain Bardwell's were undergoing repairs in Salem. His mother's death had

brought him a small sum of money, which he had put into Andrew Bardwell's hands, and had thus become a shareholder in a venture that was much to his liking. He had been well educated in his boyhood; but he seemed to have no ambition to be other than a common sailor, or to care for aught in the world except change and ever-new excitement.

Even more than the company of Hugh Darrow, David enjoyed long talks with that old seaman who had known his father. Through the night watches he loved to sit upon the deck and drink in all that Ben Turner could tell him of those voyages with Captain Dennison. He had shared that long journey back from India when Amos Dennison had lain so many weeks at the point of death.

"There was joy from cabin to forecastle, the day he began to mend," he said. "But we all marked that Amos Dennison was a changed man. Nothing could break him; but he was never the same thereafter."

On one of these nights, with the moon high and a soft wind ruffling the crests of the long swells, they passed close to another vessel. They had seen her sail all afternoon and toward dusk had exchanged signals with her. It was some time after dark when their courses so came together that

David at last could see her plainly. She was a great ship, with tremendous towering sails, and with so tall a poop that her high battle lanterns shone far overhead as David looked up at them from the deck of the schooner. She was an English man-of-war, so large and majestic and so intent upon some weighty business of her own that she had no time or inclination to inquire into the affairs of such a small vessel as that which had come almost alongside. David had seen other men-of-war, but never one larger than a frigate. This was a stately ship-of-the-line, greater than any he had ever met with before; although, so Ben Turner told him, she was really only a battleship of the second class.

Her figurehead was what caught his fancy immediately; for it was carved with the boldness of execution that marked the work of a real sculptor. It represented a horse with wings, a great trampling creature that seemed to be rearing unafraid, and snorting a challenge in the face of the waves that broke against the plunging bow. Its long pinions spread out backwards with a great sweep of feathered wings on each side of the vessel's lofty, curving beakhead. Above it stretched the heavy bowsprit, big enough to be the mizzenmast of some smaller craft. Instead of a jib, the ship carried the square spritsail and sprit top-sail of an earlier day, which

had almost gone out of use among the more recently built vessels.

She sailed with such serene dignity that she seemed scarcely to be moving through the long regular swells; yet she passed the *Santa Maria* as easily as though that vessel were riding at anchor. Her tall bulwarks rose above them, showing a double line of gun ports, each round, black opening surrounded by a beautifully carved and gilded wreath of laurel leaves and surmounted by a lion's head. As the schooner fell astern, David could see the massive beauty of the great ship's modeling, the intricate pattern of her myriad shrouds and stays, and the magnificence of her towering stern. Such a maze of curves and flourishes, of gilded dolphins, of painted figures and shields and banners, showing their bright blue and scarlet even in the moonlight! Some of the upper windows stood open, letting forth a stream of light and the sound of voices and laughter.

"Some red-faced old admiral is sitting up yonder at his wine," observed Turner, "and rare good wine it probably is, set out on the finest of white damask linen. The officers live softly on board these great ships of the old navy!"

"Do you know what vessel she is?" asked David.

"Aye, she is the *Pegasus,* an ancient ship, but a

noble one. Do you see that cipher A.R. at the top of her carving, just below the center lantern? That means she was built in the reign of good Queen Anne, and has had a long day upon the high seas. She will come to the end of her usefulness before many years now; the ship breakers will take her, or she will be sent to the bottom by the guns of some Frenchman."

"Why not by those of some American man-of-war?" It was Hugh Darrow's voice that spoke through the darkness. "She would be a great target. I should like to level a gun at her myself."

David moved uneasily in the dusk. The stately beauty of the old ship had moved him strangely; so that he could not bear to think of that queenly creature of the seas as wounded and broken and sinking under an enemy's cannon. Yet it would be a brave end for her, he thought, to go down amid the crashing and shouting of battle and with her colors still flying aloft until they dipped beneath the surging waves. He fell to dreaming of himself as her commander, pictured himself as standing upon her quarter-deck issuing orders above the din and tumult of her last tremendous fight. He sat watching her as she moved farther and farther away, with the sheen of the moonlight on the curved silver of her sails, with her beauty and

grace undiminished as she grew smaller and smaller across the shimmering waters.

"I believe the great ship has sailed away with this lad's heart," declared Ben Turner. "Ah, I know how it feels, that shiver of joy that goes through you the first time you see one of those noble old vessels. I would shoot a broadside into her as gayly as would you, Hugh Darrow, if she were fighting on the enemy's side; but it would be a grievous sight to see her go down."

Through the space of five days, the *Santa Maria* had taken apparently an aimless course over the broad reaches of the Atlantic. The purpose, so David knew, was to throw off the pursuit of that vessel which had set out to follow them. And how, he wondered, on those trackless plains of blue water, could the King's brig ever find them now? It must be that they were safe at last to go about their definite business.

By this time David had passed many hours in the company of James Babcock and had learned to like and admire him more and more. It was pleasant to work with him, even at a task no more exciting than the examination of the cargo lists and checking off the flour and fish that made up the most of their lading, with the casks of rum, the potatoes, hams, whale oil, and candles that, in small

quantities, completed their list of honest New England products.

Master Babcock had been a merchant in Boston, so David learned from Anthony, although his father had been a doctor and had taught his son medicine and surgery that he might follow in the parental footsteps. But mercantile pursuits had appealed to the son far more than a profession; so that he had finally entered a countinghouse and had risen quickly to making commercial ventures of his own. He had prospered, but had never been too much absorbed in the gathering of money to be blind to other matters. He saw clearly what way things in the American colonies were drifting, and was as anxious as were his great friends, Captain Bardwell and Amos Dennison, to labor for that day when America should be free. He had put money into Amos Dennison's venture, and, having lost it, was now putting more into Andrew Bardwell's, and offering himself and his skill at trading to help bring the project to a successful end. The Mercantile System had borne hard upon him; so that he had no large sum of ready money to offer when the chance came to purchase the *Santa Maria.* But, so David suspected, it was by far the largest share of those in which he, Captain Bardwell, Anthony Churchill and Hugh Darrow all had joined. He

was a nervous, impatient, kindly man, with a sharp wit and a fund of ever-ready jests which were to lighten some discouraging days on that long voyage.

David often wondered whether Anthony Churchill, with his views on universal equality, would not deem the discipline of life on shipboard both unjust and irksome. The abuse of the men before the mast, so common on other vessels, was not tolerated under Andrew Bardwell's command; although there was no lack of strict orders and heavy toil. Anthony, however, appeared to feel that he was laboring in the cause of democracy, even when he was giving and receiving peremptory commands, and fell into the ways of a ship's officer without difficulty. The salt air whipped some color into his pale face, and seemed to give him far more energy of thought and speech than had the burning of midnight candles over Voltaire and Rousseau. He and James Babcock held long and able discussions over religious and political philosophy, which David, sitting by, could never follow. Anthony seemed to think that to give up his work as a divinity student for an adventure in gun-running was no incongruous thing.

" The whole question lies in the matter of whether or not your cause is just," he said, and added simply, " God means us to defend our country, as surely

as he has told us to lay down our lives for our friends."

David often saw him standing at the rail looking over the blue expanse of water with unseeing eyes, building up glorious visions of that country of his which should stand some day before the whole world as the embodiment of liberty.

"And when America is a nation among other nations, one of her most able leaders will be Anthony Churchill," James Babcock said to Captain Bardwell in David's presence. He drew a sigh. "It would be good to be young in that young country, Andrew!" he concluded.

"They may need a few heads as old as ours," returned Andrew Bardwell. "We must even do what we can."

In the cabin aft, where all were friends of longer standing than the period of the voyage, and where all but the first mate were part owners in the *Santa Maria,* etiquette was not severe, and there was much laughter and joking back and forth, and never any stiffness of formal ways. Mr. Willets was a man of slow mind and slow speech, and could never learn what to make of James Babcock's jesting ways; but he was a good-natured soul and so faithful a worker that Andrew Bardwell told David that he might well take the big mate as an example of what a ship's

officer should be. They made, in all, a goodly and congenial company, who were setting out in such narrow quarters and with such high aims. The men in the forecastle, all carefully chosen by Andrew Bardwell, had known vaguely that there was service to America in the purpose of the expedition, combined with some danger, and had enlisted with a will.

"A sailor will set out with the lightest of hearts on the longest of voyages," said Ben Turner sagely, "if he thinks there is a chance for a good fight somewhere along the way."

On the evening of the fifth day, they slipped into the tiny harbor of a barren, wind-swept isle, called, on the chart, Half-Moon Island. When they had first sighted it, in the early afternoon, it had seemed like a mere spit of sand, which might at any moment be washed under by the hungry waves. When they came close, however, the island proved to be a place of rolling dunes, outcroppings of tall rocks, and even, here and there, a few tufts of twisted, tempest-beaten pine trees. A little fishing village was huddled in the curve of the ragged, rock-bound harbor.

Here, it seemed, they were to spend some time, and were to make various changes in the rigging of their ship. The harbor and the village, David

learned, not infrequently gave refuge to crippled ships and worn-out mariners. Strangers caused something of a stir among the inhabitants of such an isolated town; they were welcomed and well served in any of the tasks they had in hand. The men, who spent most of the year in lobstering and catching cod, proved to be good ship carpenters when occasion demanded. The tiny blacksmith shop at the head of the single, sandy street could furnish anything in the way of rings and bolts and forged iron pins that a shipmaster could desire. Lumber was also available, good sweet pine to replace broken masts and yards which had been carried away. The blacksmith and Andrew Bardwell appeared to be old friends; so that everything in the village seemed to be at his command.

Here the *Santa Maria* was to be fitted with topmasts, and rigged for those square topsails so often carried by the larger schooners of that day. And one afternoon Ben Turner was let down over the stern with a can of paint and a brush, where, by the simple device of painting out one letter and altering another, he made a complete transformation of the vessel's name. Instead of the *Santa Maria* of questionable, papish connections, she became the plain Yankee schooner, *Anna Maria*.

"Those who said that our ship was unlucky and,

having once put to sea, would never be heard of again, were not so far wrong," said Andrew Bardwell. "It is no bad thing for our purpose that the *Santa Maria* should disappear according to expectation. We may be sure that the *Anna Maria* will do just as well in her place."

"And to change a letter or two is not like changing a vessel's name," Ben Turner declared solemnly. "Such a thing should never bring ill luck; else I would not have lent my hand to the task."

All went well until it came to the making of new sails, when it appeared that there was a dearth of sailmakers on board. Ben Turner was the only one who had any skill in the work; and his fingers had become so clumsy and stiff that the task went forward but slowly. David, Nat Christy, Hugh Darrow, and various others made attempts at learning the art, but were so awkward with the needle and palm that their efforts were not suffered to go very far.

It was the blacksmith at the village forge who gave Andrew Bardwell a bit of advice that was to have far-reaching results.

"If you want a good sailmaker," he said, "there is a strange fellow who lives beyond the harbor point. He can turn his hand to many things, and to that work amongst them. He dwells all alone;

nor do any of us know who or what he really is. We could only guess at what his past has been; and perhaps it is all the better that none should know. He is an odd, unfriendly man, and the folk of the village are afraid of him. But he will do your work well."

It chanced that David and Hugh Darrow were with Andrew Bardwell at the forge. Since the ship's master had business elsewhere in the village, he sent his two companions to follow the rocky path that led around the harbor, and to seek out the man of whom the blacksmith had spoken.

"Is it Adam Applegate you want?" said a stout woman whom David had stopped for further information as to the way. "Ah, now, I would have no dealings with that one if I were you, and you with such a fair, honest face! But if you must go, take that path beside the great red bowlder on the beach, and follow the crooked way as far as where the sand dunes begin."

Before they had got to the end of the street, word seemed to have run before them as to whither they were going. A little girl came running out from a flowered dooryard, and caught David by the edge of his coat.

"Do not go to the house of Adam Applegate," she begged, with her earnestness of purpose over-

coming her shyness. "He will do you some terrible mischief. Do you not know that he is a sorcerer?"

David smiled, and Hugh Darrow laughed loud and long; whereat the little girl ran back again to the shelter of her mother's garden. It was over seventy years since the witches had been hung in Salem; and talk of sorcery had died out in New England. But on this little island, so it seemed, old superstitions perished hard, and foolish people still vexed themselves with fears of evil spells and black magic. So David was thinking, as he and Hugh left the village and took their way along the rough path. It led through beach grass and past clumps of bayberry bushes to the farthest point of the harbor.

They came, finally, across a ridge and down into a hollow of the shifting sand dunes as round as a cup, with the sea lapping against the short stretch of white beach at its edge. Here, facing the water, stood Adam Applegate's cabin, a crazy structure built of driftwood and the timbers of some wrecked ship. A crooked pine tree shaded the doorway and the path before it, which was deep in soft, white sand. A wisp of smoke was going up from the misshapen chimney, and a lean dog sitting beside the doorway drew back his lips and snarled at them.

Hugh Darrow knocked heavily against the battered doorpost.

After a moment of shuffling and fumbling within, the door opened.

"Hugh Darrow!" cried a great voice, at which Hugh burst into an uproarious laugh, of which David did not much like the sound.

"I thought I should find an old friend here," exclaimed Hugh. "To think you are still above water, Adam Applegate, and still unhung! Do you mind the engagement off Lagos, when we first met, and how the *Amaranth* went down on fire with every soul on board?"

"Ah, those were days!" returned the other, with a regretful note in his husky voice. "But come in, man, come in. And who is this young friend of yours? A likely youth seeking adventure also, as I take it."

The man was somewhat short in stature, with a tremendous chest and long sinewy arms. The texture of his skin was like rhinoceros hide, so tanned and wind-beaten and weather-worn was it. The fellow's eyes showed gray and bright under his overhanging brows. From his jaw and across the side of his head ran a great scar from some old cutlass wound that had sheared away a part of his ear. He was dressed in battered breeches and a

shirt so torn that it showed more of his skin than it did of its linen fabric. Yet his clothing was clean; and the interior of the tiny cabin was set in careful order, with a fire flickering upon the well-swept hearth.

For an hour Hugh and Adam Applegate sat on either side of the hearth, exchanging tales and reminiscences, with little attention for David who sat below the window on a great sea chest and wondered mutely at what he heard. The lean dog sat upon the hearth and stared fixedly at the boy. He remembered, from old Anna's tales of the past, that witches had always a familiar spirit from the nether world, who went about with them, usually in the shape of a black cat. If this man was a sorcerer, as the little girl had said, was not this ugly dog perhaps his familiar spirit? David felt a great desire to move over upon his seat to get out of the gaze of those glassy, yellow eyes.

The talk of the two old friends was of tempests and sea fights, of death and danger in every ghastly form. How Hugh Darrow, with even his ten years of voyaging, could have seen so much of lurid and desperate adventure was something scarcely to be understood. In some of the engagements of which they spoke, the two seemed to have fought as adversaries, and in some of them as comrades. David

noted that in those affairs that smacked of open murder and of piracy, Hugh and the old sailor seemed to have been opposed to each other, but to have no ill feeling on that account.

"So it has always been," declared Applegate at last; "you, ever just inside the law, and I always just beyond it. And there you are, whole and young and setting out on some new voyage that promises great things, I'll be bound; while here am I broken and old and hunted by the law into such a dull and desolate corner of the world as this. But we have seen great days — great days! Now tell me what strange chance has brought you two wandering to my door."

Hugh explained in guarded terms how the *Anna Maria* was carrying her cargo to trade in the West Indies, "at English ports and others, for purposes of her own."

"We are changing the dress of our ship; but with not too much talk about it," he added, "and we wish for an honest, discreet fellow to aid us in stitching new sails. We have only one old and clumsy hand on board, for that labor; and there is need of haste."

"For that I am indeed your man," grinned the other. "Was I not sailmaker for — you know who?"

He opened a cupboard in the wall and brought out a big, stone bottle, from which he poured a great draught for himself and for Hugh. They offered a share to David; and he tasted it out of politeness, but came near to strangling on the liquid which seemed composed of liquid fire and brine.

"You were always a moderate man, Adam Applegate," remarked Hugh Darrow. "Another old buccaneer like you would have spent the days drinking himself to death in this loneliness of exile."

"I am too wise," returned the sailor, "to fuddle my wits with strong spirits. A mild dram like this is all that I take, and only now and then, at that. I have always believed that there was work for me still to do some day; and that a man of my knowledge and experience would not go utterly to waste, even on this forgotten isle. And I begin to believe that the day has come. I will go back with you to see your skipper, and the work he would have me be about."

He took down a coat made of tolerably good blue sea-cloth with facings that had once been scarlet. He put it on and took up a three-cornered hat, battered almost beyond recognizable shape, with a gold cord that was black with tarnish. The lean dog followed them out of the door, made no move to

accompany them, but sat down on the step and uttered a long, dreadful howl.

"Can you not still that ill-omened brute?" asked Hugh as they went along the path.

"He is a strange beast and does what he chooses. No, I cannot quiet him. I do not often hear him utter such a sound as that." Adam Applegate looked back as he spoke, seeming to be as uneasy as Hugh. As they mounted the slope, the creature lifted its chin again and set up another long, doleful wail that echoed through the hollow behind them.

He seemed to have taken a definite liking to David.
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CHAPTER VI

THE ANCIENT BUCCANEER

It was an odd scene when Andrew Bardwell and Adam Applegate met face to face and each took the other's measure. Captain Bardwell's countenance, open and square and honest, was a strange contrast to the other's wrinkled and crafty visage. Each, however, seemed to discover some cause for respect in the other; so that they agreed upon the work quickly. For some days thereafter, Adam Applegate sat upon the deck and stitched away with a strange deftness that was quite unexpected in those great, rough hands. He talked much with Ben Turner and with such of the other sailors as occasionally helped him. He asked many shrewd questions as to what cargo they carried and where was their destined port, and often worked long in silent thought when he had heard the answers.

He seemed to have taken a definite liking to David and to enjoy having him sit by while he recounted to him many strange and hidden chapters of sea history. Through all his tales ran traces of a curi-

ous, distorted sense of honor, a code which he would plainly never be willing to violate.

"It was a drawn battle," he would say, "and we realized that, and so molested them no further." Or, "The fellow would not turn and fight me, and I would not run him through from the back; therefore he still lives."

It was evident that his guesses as to the real purpose of the *Anna Maria's* voyage came ever nearer to the truth. Not even the cautious Ben Turner could withhold information from him, when his sharp wits set out to run it down. Only from David he learned little; for David would rather listen than talk, and sat beside him on the deck to drink in his stories by the hour.

"Did you ever before see a man of my way of life who had white hair?" he demanded suddenly one day at the end of an account of some gory encounter off the coast of what he called "High Barbary."

"No," answered David. "I never saw a man like you before; but even when I pictured pirates in my mind, I never thought of one with white hair."

"Hush," said the other, "that was no pleasant name to apply to a man, even if you have guessed that it is a fitting one. You have never heard me

say a word that could really prove that I have sailed under the black flag, have you? When Hugh Darrow and I, knowing each other's histories, talked freely of the past and in your hearing, we were doing you the honor of taking you into our counsels and we trusted you to say nothing. But it is true that men like me seldom live to have white hair; swinging or drowning makes an end of them long before old age comes. It only proves that Adam Applegate is wiser than his fellows and can still work his old wits to good purpose. But your voyage, now," he broke off, turning the talk suddenly, "your first port, so I hear, is to be Jamaica. And after Jamaica — where then?"

"I do not know," replied David briefly.

"Well, well, and you the supercargo's clerk, not knowing whither you are bound! Nor are you better informed, so I suppose, as to the cargo that you will carry back to New England?"

To this David made no direct answer but changed the subject in his turn.

"Do you never have evil dreams of those deaths and battles that you have seen in the past?" he asked.

Adam Applegate was silent for a moment.

"You would not think it, lad, but what I dream of is a New England town of white, square houses

on the slope of a hill that runs down to a harbor, of a slim white church spire, and gabled roofs showing through the green of elms. You may think from the tale of my roving that I was born in Portugal or Algiers, or in some cutthroat town of South America. But I was born in New England, as you were. There are those who take the sea road out of Gloucester or Salem or Portsmouth — I will name no names — who arrive at such strange ports and who have done such things by the way that they can never come back again. No, the nearest I can wend to New England is this rocky bit of island, where abide simple folk who ask few questions. But I think always of that country where I truly belong; and I would serve her with a loyal heart an she would have me. King George and England are supposedly our masters; but even in this outlying bit of the world I have heard that it is not to be so forever."

He bent a sharp glance upon David; so that the boy knew that they were coming back to the subject of the former questioning. He was bound that he would reveal no secrets, and therefore got up and went below.

He often wondered how much Adam Applegate had gathered from the careless talk of Hugh Darrow. Even at the best, Hugh had no discreet

tongue; and now that he spent so many hours in the company of his old comrade it would not be surprising if he had revealed much. When the day's work was over, Hugh often got leave to go ashore with his friend, and passed long hours with him in the cabin on the sand dunes, drinking and talking beside the fire.

"What do the village folk say of me?" Adam Applegate once asked David. "Do they not tell you that a good, honest lad like yourself should have no dealings with such as I?"

"They did say some such thing to me the day we sought out your cabin," David answered. "And a little girl told us you were a sorcerer."

"Aye, aye," exclaimed Applegate, apparently not ill pleased. "They do say such things of me and who knows but they may be right? I have learned to dabble in some curious arts, and have saved myself sometimes in ways that have not to do with pistols and cutlasses."

Master James Babcock enjoyed questioning the old buccaneer and was generally met by a wit as lively as his own. Roars of laughter were apt to go up when the two were in talk together on the deck. Andrew Bardwell, also, found much to discuss with Adam Applegate and received and made use of more than one shrewd suggestion concerning

the fitting and the handling of the *Anna Maria*. By his advice her anchorage was moved farther up the harbor.

"For this is no very safe port at best," he explained. "If the wind is north by east, there is no shelter at all; and even when it is in another quarter you are apt to drag anchor except at this one point."

The sails were finished, topsails and staysails, and were bent at last. Adam Applegate's task was at an end. He received his pay and rowed away with Hugh Darrow, who was to spend a last afternoon with him in his cabin. All on board the *Anna Maria* was now ready for setting forth once more, this time direct for the Spanish Main.

It was a gusty autumn day, that afternoon when the work was finished; the darkness had fallen early and an overcast sky had made the dusk seem even heavier than usual. At twilight Hugh Darrow returned on board and sent David to ask if he might speak with the Captain and Master Babcock in the cabin. He was invited to come below at once, and stood under the swinging lantern to deliver a message from Adam Applegate.

"I think," he began directly, "that my old comrade has come very near to guessing the truth of what we are about on this voyage of the *Anna*

Maria. And he has made so bold as to send me to tell you that there are certain things he could put before you, if you will come to his house, to the end that the venture might be a more successful and profitable one."

"Why did he not speak of this when he was on board?" asked Andrew Bardwell.

"He has hesitated long over the matter, and has only come to the point, I believe, now that he sees the *Anna Maria* about to depart. You are to take his offer for what you think it worth; but I do verily believe that he speaks with the very honest wish of serving our ends."

"There is no one," replied Andrew Bardwell slowly, "who can truly say that Adam Applegate is an honest man."

"No one," agreed Hugh, "but even at that, there is a chance that his great experience may, in some way, be of use to us."

"And how," questioned Master Babcock with a penetrating look, "how has it come about that he knows so much of the object of our voyaging?"

"That I cannot say," Hugh answered. "He has picked up a little here and a little there, and has guessed the rest. He is so sharp of wit as to be uncanny."

There was a pause as the two older men sat think-

ing. Andrew Bardwell had signed to David not to leave; so that the boy stood now behind Master Babcock's chair and watched the troubled frown upon his Captain's ruddy face.

"I am for going," burst out James Babcock impulsively. "It can do no harm to advise with the fellow; and he has a strange and varied knowledge that may indeed serve our purposes. But," he recollected himself, "the decision is, of course, yours, Captain Bardwell."

"I think you are right," declared Andrew Bardwell, "although there is something within me that dislikes intimate dealings with that dark man. But, as you say, it can do no harm to hear what he wishes to tell us. It were better to go ashore to consult him than to have him come aboard again. Do you wish to go with us, Darrow?"

"If you please, no, sir," answered Hugh. "I do not desire to have further voice in the matter than to carry Applegate's message."

"So be it, then," said Captain Bardwell, rising. "We will take Turner and Nat Christy, and be back within the hour. We could make quicker time if it were not so dark a night."

David's face showed plainly his very great longing to be with the party; but his wish went unfulfilled.

"I like the errand too little to take you with us," Andrew Bardwell said to him; while James Babcock added:

"You must be in charge of the supercargo's affairs while I am gone. Who knows what urgent business might arise within that hour?"

David attempted to smile at his jest. Neither statement contented him greatly; but he could not protest. The schooner was short-handed; for the first mate and half the crew had been given leave to go ashore, to spend the last evening in port at such limited diversions as the little village offered. Anthony Churchill, as second mate, was to be in command of the vessel during the Captain's absence. Nat Christy grinned with delight at David as he followed the others over the side, making the less lucky boy wish to smite him.

The night was very black; but the wind had dropped for a little, leaving the harbor very still. The time passed slowly, Anthony Churchill and David spending the most of it on deck, hanging over the rail and trying to peer through the darkness.

"Listen," cried David suddenly.

Anthony stopped what he was saying and hark-ened.

"As I live," he declared softly, "there is a ship coming into the harbor!"

They could hear the rush of water under the vessel's bow, then a succession of orders and the rattle of a chain as she cast anchor. Against the black of the sky and the gray of the water, she was scarcely visible; but David had managed to make out the outline of her tall, narrow sails before they came down; nor could he fail to recognize them.

"It is the same brig that fired on us, out of Benton Harbor," he told Anthony, while the other nodded quickly. "Do you think they will send some one aboard of us?" David asked in anxious tones.

There was no need to answer; for already the creak of oarlocks could be heard through the dark. Only a few minutes after, came a hail alongside. There was nothing for it but to lower a line to make fast the brig's boat and to greet the unwelcome visitors as they came aboard.

It was the commander of the brig himself, Captain Carver, of His Majesty's ship *Dryad,* who came on deck, a thin man, not very tall, but with a prodigious voice. He had brought with him a midshipman, a very important youth not more than seventeen years of age, and a force of armed men that greatly outnumbered the schooner's diminished crew.

He spoke over the side to some one below.

"Leave two men in the boat, Slee; the wind is

getting up. But come aboard yourself." David could scarcely feel surprise when there came swinging over the rail a lean man with a narrow face, and a thin pointed jaw. In a high, cracked voice he gave some direction to Hugh Darrow, who had lowered an extra line to the boat below. As David watched him he realized that he had not guessed wrongly as to that voice which had hailed the *Anna Maria* in the fog, and that this was indeed Jethro Slee. He studied the man's countenance in the yellow lantern light, for it had been dusky twilight when they had met upon the point and he had never before seen those sallow, thin features quite plainly. He slipped back in the shadow himself, having no wish for speech with his enemy and Captain Bardwell's.

"What ship is this?" the English captain was demanding.

"The *Anna Maria,* out of Benton, owned in Rogersport, Andrew Bardwell, master," Anthony Churchill told him. "The captain and first mate are ashore."

Captain Carver looked about him angrily and cast a glance aloft.

"The vessel we sought had no topmasts," he said in a puzzled undertone to his midshipman, "and it is too dark to make out the lines of her hull. Yet what could any other schooner be doing in such a

port as this? We will go below," he continued to Anthony Churchill, "and I will look at the ship's papers."

They went down into the cabin, the two officers with a great clattering of swords; Anthony and David followed with an even greater beating of hearts. Seated at the table, the captain examined, with eager suspicion, the documents laid before him. Andrew Bardwell, whether by bribery or argument, had succeeded in having the new name of the vessel set down upon the clearance papers; so that there was naught which the King's officer could find amiss. He looked through the manifest of the cargo and handed it to the midshipman.

"You will go down into the hold, Mr. Hapgood," he said, "and see that the lading is just as is set forth here, and that the vessel carries nothing else. How soon do you expect the return of your captain?" he demanded of Anthony Churchill.

"In an hour, sir, at the most," Anthony replied.

It was David's office to accompany the midshipman down into the hold, and to carry the lantern which lit his ill-humored examination of the *Anna Maria's* cargo. The officer was younger than David, but a well-grown boy, and thoroughly convinced of his own worth.

"Stinking salt fish," he ejaculated, as they

threaded their way amongst the rows of barrels, "and flour and hams and your vile New England rum. Just such a cargo as we should have known you would carry! We have come a long way on a fool's errand."

"How did you chance to come to this island and to this harbor?" David could not forbear asking.

The uniformed youth gave him a very wise look across the yellow circle of lantern light.

"You must understand, of course, that I am not at liberty to tell you how we got information concerning a certain vessel and her plan to touch at forbidden ports. But we saw her set sail and we spoke the *Pegasus* at sea, who had seen just such a craft laying a course that would take her to this island. Whether yours is the vessel or not, I am not yet certain; nor do I care. At least, I have seen all that needs be of your dirty cargo."

"You saw the *Pegasus?* She is a noble ship!" exclaimed David unguardedly, his admiration for the majestic, old vessel overcoming his caution. But the other did not notice his slip.

"She is a good craft," he answered loftily. "I am to be transferred to her at the end of this voyage. I shall be glad to be free at last of the *Dryad* and her captain. He is a mean, ill-tempered man, especially when he is drunk."

Since the inspection of the cargo was now considered sufficient, the two returned to the cabin, where the captain sat over the ship's papers and a bottle of wine which Anthony had brought out for him. He could find no fault either with the documents or with Andrew Bardwell's liquor; but black suspicion still sat upon his face.

"You will remain here," he directed, when he had heard the young midshipman's report, "and await the return of Captain Bardwell. If he does not come back within the hour, you are to go ashore and seek him out. Tell him that I command his presence on board the *Dryad* at once; and if he should hesitate, just remind him that our ship lies in the harbor way, and that we can blow his schooner to splinters with one broadside. I will leave Slee and five other men, and will later send the boat back for you. I must return to the brig; I do not like the way that the wind is getting into the northeast, while we lie in that villainous anchorage."

"Yes, sir," assented the midshipman. He was very humble until his superior officer had left the schooner, and then became as overbearing as the Lord High Admiral himself. He swaggered into the cabin, sat down in the master's chair, and poured himself a glass of wine.

"That is somewhat heady liquor, sir, which even

our captain does not drink, as being too potent," ventured Anthony. He was gathering up the papers for David to put away, and turned to Hugh Darrow, who had just come down to speak to him. "Get out a bottle of the milder port, Darrow, from the corner locker."

"Hold your tongue," roared the young officer, "and you, there, bring me another bottle like this one. The captain has well-nigh emptied it."

Hugh looked at Anthony and hesitated, upon which the youth roared at him again.

"Do as I bid you," he commanded, and, since his order was not instantly obeyed, he jumped up from his chair, whipped out his sword and struck Hugh across the shoulders with the flat of it. If David had ever had doubts of Hugh Darrow's temper, they came to an end at that moment. The man's rage lit his dark face, but his stern spirit immediately mastered it. He stood back in silence and waited for Anthony Churchill, his superior officer, to make the proper move.

"Put up your sword," ordered Anthony. "You are vastly awkward with it; but you may yet do some harm."

"I'll run the insolent villain through," shouted the midshipman, "and you after him. No one shall speak thus to an officer of His Majesty's Navy."

He lunged forward at Darrow, but Anthony Churchill caught his wrist with such a crushing grasp that the sword fell clattering to the floor. Hugh, meanwhile, had closed the door of the cabin and bolted it. The midshipman raised a shout for his men on deck; but it was drowned by Hugh and Anthony, who instantly raised such a clamor of laughing and singing that it went unheard.

"Your voice has so recently changed," said Anthony gravely, "that it is no match for our lusty throats. Your men will think that we are all drinking merrily together; they are, no doubt, well used to hearing just such an uproar."

The young officer, quenched and weaponless, stood behind the table.

"What are you going to do with me?" he faltered.

"You should understand," said Anthony sternly, "that when you strike a man, you should be willing to fight him. You have lost your sword, but you have still your fists."

"But he is only a common seaman," objected the youth.

"He is a man," asserted Anthony briefly. "In the King's Navy you may think otherwise; but on this ship, men are men. You will some day learn, to your cost, that Americans can fight as well as

you who consider yourselves so far above them."

"We have heard some such prating nonsense," replied the midshipman, "but we of the service think little of it. You cannot expect me, my man, to soil my hands upon your dirty fellow out of the forecastle."

"Nor do I," agreed Anthony. "Darrow is too big to fight you, stripling as you are, and so am I. But David here will stand up to you, I make no doubt. David, will you uphold for us the Rights of Man? Although," he added, "it is not in my recollection that you are much of a fighter."

"No," said David, "you are right, I am not much of a fighter."

"Then if the boy is afraid to fight me," declared the midshipman hotly, "I will take on both of you, great hulking cowards that you are."

David smiled a slow, broad smile.

"You mistake my meaning greatly," he answered quietly. "I am not much of a fighter, but with you I will fight with all my heart."

He stripped off his coat and rolled back the sleeves of his shirt, while the other unwillingly followed his example. Anthony Churchill made them stand crosswise of the cabin, so that the light of the swinging lantern should fall equally upon both.

"Now," he said.

David, as he ducked to avoid the first swinging blow, recognized at once that his adversary was greatly his superior in skill, and was, moreover, possessed of a longer reach. He, himself, had little experience of fighting except for a few bouts of fisticuffs at school. But he was battling for the rights of a new country against the arrogance of an ancient kingdom, and he struck out, undaunted, with all his might.

The boy who was so proud of wearing the King's coat had not been an officer long enough to learn much skill with the sword; but it was evident that he had been taught boxing from his early youth. And the boy who stood up for the new country had learned only to defend himself when need arose, and had very little of form and science. The midshipman, however, was oversure of himself; he was soft with the idle living of a ship in harbor; and he was, besides, in a towering rage.

He struck and countered, he dodged back and stepped forward, and he laughed with delight when he brought home a blow on David's tense body. The fight raged up and down the narrow cabin, blundered into the table and banged against the lockers. David was faring badly; his body was bruised and his head was swimming; yet his mind was still clear enough to note that the other was striking reck-

lessly, and paying less and less heed to defense. Almost to his own surprise, David landed a blow under his antagonist's ear, a squarely dealt blow that made the other stagger. He struck furiously in return, lifting his arm just high enough to expose himself to the desperate thud that David planted below his ribs. With a squelching sigh, the breath went completely out of him and he dropped limply upon the floor. There was absolute silence in the cabin save for the midshipman's broken gasping and Anthony Churchill's counting in measured tones.

"Twenty," announced Anthony, as the young midshipman at last sat up. "The match is yours, David. We are proud of you, lad."

He and Hugh Darrow helped the young officer to his feet and seated him in the captain's chair. Anthony dashed cold water over his head; while Hugh brought him a draught of that milder wine he had so angrily despised.

"Yes, I am all right," he said at last dizzily. "Do not let any of my men know that I was overthrown by an awkward fighter like yonder clerk. I cannot think how it could have come about."

"We will keep your secret, sir," Anthony Churchill assured him gravely. With equal gravity he restored to him his sword. "Here is the weapon that

you laid aside a few moments ago. And now, since the hour has elapsed, perhaps you had better fulfill your captain's orders, and seek out the master of this ship on shore."

David fairly held his breath until the whole company from the *Dryad* had embarked. It was not so much the young midshipman that he feared; it was far more the sinister presence of Jethro Slee. He found it difficult to remember that the man had not yet seen him, and perhaps had no knowledge of his presence on board; he was in a veritable agony of apprehension that those narrow-set black eyes would peer at him in the lantern light and that high voice would cry out some treason against Amos Dennison and Andrew Bardwell. But the boat got off at last, and he was able finally to let forth a long sigh of relief.

"If you row toward those lights, you will find the village landing stage," Anthony Churchill had explained easily to the young officer, "and any one of the townsfolk will point out to you the path to the cabin beyond the point. But the way is a rocky one; you must go cautiously."

His manner was calmness itself until the boat got fairly off, then he wheeled upon Hugh and David and spoke with desperate haste.

"Do you two take the gig and row, with all the

speed that is in you, for the bit of beach inside the point. From there you can cross the rocky ridge and carry warning to those in the cabin. David, do not forget to buckle on your pistols before you go. The King's men will take it ill should they find you on shore, and it were best to go armed. I would I could go with you."

"You cannot leave the ship unofficered," said Hugh. "But with the wind rising thus, David and I could not make the point alone. Give me Tom Brooks to help me pull, and David shall steer."

The gig dropped into the water, and sped away into the dark. The wind was blowing strangely, now rising into fierce gusts, now dropping low. The harbor was full of choppy seas upon which the gig pitched and danced as it went forward under the strong sweep of the oars. The course of the wind was dead against them; so that it was a long, fierce struggle to make headway toward the point. At last Hugh Darrow spoke through the dark.

"We will never make that stretch of beach," he said, "or will only come too late, should we go on heading thither. But there is a little cove a quarter of a mile nearer, where we can beach the boat and still be ahead of the landing party."

David altered the course; and the boat was fairly lifted out of the water by the renewed efforts of

the sturdy oarsmen. It was a joyful sound to hear the keel ground on the gravel. All three stepped out, knee-deep in the splashing water, in their haste to be ashore. In desperate haste they pulled up the boat and climbed up to the path that skirted the cove. They stood listening for a moment, and could hear faintly the voices of the men from the *Dryad*. Hugh Darrow ran ahead, seeming to know the way blindfold; while David and Tom Brooks struggled after him as best they could. They climbed over the ridge, plunged down into the sandy hollow and came at last to the cabin.

Hugh opened the door without knocking. David could see the three men sitting about the fire, Andrew Bardwell looking grave and troubled, James Babcock with his face aflame with excitement, but old Adam Applegate with a countenance as unmoved as though nothing of importance was afoot. Hugh Darrow reported briefly and clearly what they had to tell.

"We could not make the place we hoped for, so we landed in the cove. I fear that even now the men have come between us and the boat."

Adam Applegate's gray eyes sparkled.

"There are seven of them, you say. And so are there seven of us, and armed."

He reached up and took down from the wall a

curiously inlaid old pistol which he handled lovingly.

But Andrew Bardwell shook his head. "The brig lies nearer to the point than does the schooner," he said. "At the first sound of shots she will send reënforcements ashore, and, further, would open fire on the *Anna Maria,* so that Churchill could not send us help."

"Then we must find another way." Adam Applegate laid down his pistol regretfully, as he spoke. "Master David, do you and Tom Brooks run back down the path and watch for the coming of the King's men. Lie down on the top of the ridge, and when they are close, roll down a stone into the hollow for a signal. I crave your pardon, Captain Bardwell, for giving orders in your presence; but old Adam Applegate has got you into this coil, and now must get you out again."

David, with Tom Brooks at his heels, stole down the path to reconnoiter. They could hear the tramp of feet coming along the rocky way. It was quite true that the men had already passed the cove where the boat lay. The two slipped back, climbed the slope, and lay down behind a clump of stunted juniper. David was a little below the crest of the ridge, looking backward and straining his eyes through the dark to watch for the on-coming men.

He heard Tom Brooks give a gasp of astonishment and terror.

"For the love of the saints, Master David," he whispered, "what fiend's work have we here?"

David scrambled to the height of the ridge and lay looking down. Adam Applegate had set fire to the heaps of driftwood, his store of winter fuel, that lay along the beach. He had done it, so David thought, to give light for the coming encounter; for the whole hollow was filled with a ruddy glow. But directly opposite him there appeared, suddenly, a strange figure, tall and menacing, and with long swinging arms. It was black and forbidding, yet he could see through it, and make out the shape of a crooked pine tree behind it. As he watched, another took form beside it, and then another, until the whole hollow was full of strange, dancing black devils.

CHAPTER VII

THE SORCERER'S HOLLOW

David could hear the teeth of Tom Brooks chattering with terror; and he felt a creepy sensation steal over his own body. In his horror at the sight before him he had almost forgotten what he had been sent to do; but he recollected in time and, as the party of men clambered to the summit of the ridge, he rolled a stone down the slope into the hollow. Immediately the devils leaped and danced more madly than ever; they gathered into a dense black group, then broke and scattered and filled the cup-like space of sand again. Against the white slopes they stood out, sharply outlined figures that were grotesque and misshapen and never still.

The most dreadful sight of all was to see the stone go rolling straight into the group, passing through one figure after another, before it came to rest at the foot of the slope.

"Ah-h, would you see that?" David heard a terrified voice exclaim. Not more than twenty yards away, the young midshipman stood at the crest of the ridge, looking down into the phantom-

filled hollow. The men were climbing up behind him and, one by one, came out beside their officer upon the summit of the slope. Oaths, mutterings, frank gasps of terror, greeted the apparition before their startled eyes.

"Not for all the gold in the Indies," breathed one sailor, "would I go down yonder. It's the mouth of hell opened wide."

Sailors are superstitious and the boy who led them was young; yet they might have held their ground at least in the face of the uncanny scene before them. But Jethro Slee, mounting the path the last of all, came out upon the ridge and uttered such a desperate cry of horror in his high, cracked voice, that it broke the last courage of the bravest. Just as the figures below gathered once more into close phalanx and came marching up the sandy slope, there came that thin, wavering shriek of terror. With one accord the men broke and rushed down the rocky path in headlong retreat, one almost stumbling over David in the dark as he tried to find a shorter way to the safety of the darkness below, another falling and rolling over and over among the rocks before he could pick himself up again, but neither, apparently, having knowledge of what he was about. At one point David heard the young officer, shouting, faltering, then shouting

again, urging his men to rally and go back. It was to no purpose; it was doubtful if they even heard him, for they ran on, past the cove, along the rough way toward the village.

It was hard even for David to lie still among the juniper bushes and watch that appalling company come striding up the hill.

"Do you see, their feet make no footmarks in the sand," Tom Brooks said to him in a shaking whisper.

Nearer and nearer they came, reached the edge of the ruddy light that filled the hollow, took one step further — and disappeared. A moment before the place had been crowded with that ghostly gathering; now there was nothing but the white sand and, far off toward the bit of beach, the glow of Adam Applegate's spent fires.

"Must we — must we go down there, sir?" faltered Tom Brooks. "I'm more afeard of them since they went away into nothing than I was when they was there."

"Captain Bardwell and Master Babcock are down there," said David, "and we must go to them. You have your cutlass and your pistols, Tom."

"And what good are they to me, when the stone rolled right through every one of the creatures," grumbled Brooks; but he stepped out bravely after

David, while the boy, having to gather up all his courage, it is true, stepped out of the juniper bushes and started manfully down the slope.

His spirits rose as he went forward; for, as he began to collect his startled wits, he remembered that the apparition had certainly been conjured up by Adam Applegate. Sorcerer as he was, he was their friend and had undoubtedly frightened away the enemy. Yet he was surprised, in spite of himself, to see Andrew Bardwell, James Babcock and the rest, standing by the dull coals of the fire, unharmed, and as calm as though nothing out of the way had occurred.

Captain Bardwell, when he heard of the ignominious retreat of the naval force, seemed to have but one thought, to get back to the schooner. James Babcock, however, lingered, having still some words to say to Adam Applegate.

"We spent too much of our time beating about the bush," he said, "and now, if we are to understand each other, we must speak quickly."

"I will be brief," returned Adam Applegate. "It was your plan to trade with the forbidden ports of the West Indies, the French and Spanish ones, closed to you by English law, but where the profit is great. But yours is a watched ship, and, if you seek to do as you hope, you will lose both cargo

and vessel. What I have tried to tell you is that there are other places to seek for trade. Put out to the east and to the southeastward into the track of the trade winds; there you will meet vessels of every size and kind, engaged in traffic of every sort. Amongst them you may, of a surety, hope to find again that profit which is lost to you in the West Indian ports."

"Do you mean the traffic by which you have prospered in the past?" James Babcock said sternly. "We do not touch piracy, as you must know."

"Nay," answered the other easily, "I had not thought of saying that you should. And prosper — who can say that I have done that? Enough gold pieces have run through my hands to bury me up to my shoulders; but what am I now? A solitary old man who owns nothing but a lean old dog, a man sick with longing to return to his own country; but who cannot do so unless he desire to be hanged for the privilege. But hark ye to me."

He put his hand on James Babcock's arm. David, watching him through the dusky light from the red coals, saw that unchanging countenance moved at last. It shone with eagerness and high excitement. The gray eyes burned under the deep brows; and the harsh lines about the mouth grew tenser and deeper. What had that face been like, the boy won-

dered, when it was lit by the red flash of gunfire, or when it reflected the crimson flame of a doomed and burning ship?

"That knowledge that I have spent my life to gain, and my soul mayhap, also — should it not be of service to some one? There are many forms of profit to be gained on that broad highway, the track of the trade wind. The Algerine pirates grow rich by pillaging and burning; there are French and Spanish and English pirates too, and a few, even, who have been born in our own country. There are some comfortable English gentlemen, decently retired with a snug estate after a long life at sea, whose fortunes have been founded on stolen doubloons and scuttled ships. But it is not of such matters that I am advising you now. There is other and more proper trade for such as you. A ship that is loaded with such supplies as yours could be, with flour and sugar, with fresh fruit and rum, would do well to fall in with those vessels coming up from the African Cape, which are wanting desperately in just such things. Their holds are full of silks and spices and other precious cargo, and in the captain's cabin there is often put away opium and gold dust to the value of a King's ransom. But in their long voyage past lands where only hostile natives dwell, where they dare not go ashore save at the peril of

their lives, food runs short, rum comes to an end, and the men sicken with scurvy. You can supply their needs at almost any price you desire. By sale or barter you may dispose of your New England goods, and come back with a cargo that a score of ships have gathered for you in the Orient. And who can enforce King George's law on that long unguarded sea road of the trade wind?"

"Aye," said Andrew Bardwell, who had walked away a few yards, had come back again and stood waiting now, impatient to be gone, "I have sailed that sea road myself and have seen that there is chance for just such trade. We thank you for your counsel, and we will talk of the matter later among ourselves. Now there is need above all things that we get back to the *Anna Maria*."

He hurried away across the sandy hollow, followed by the most of the company. But James Babcock, with David at his side, still stopped behind for a further word.

"If I mistake not," Master Babcock said, "you had yet one more thing to tell us?"

"Ah," cried Adam Applegate, "the whole worth of my counsel were lost did I not tell you of Jacob Van Dyer."

"And who may he be?" inquired James Babcock. "Make haste, man, for we must be gone."

Adam Applegate walked along beside them as they began, with ever more hurried steps, to follow the others.

"Jacob Van Dyer," he stated, "is a renegade Dutchman, with whom his own honest countrymen will have naught to do. He commands a square, bluff-bowed ship, the *Yellow Tulip,* and he trades with the Orient, with the regular habit of an old woman carrying apples and cheese to market. But a strange, wise man he is, and so wicked a one that no pirate captain on the high and the narrow seas has ever been his equal for cruelty. Marvelous rich treasure he brings back from the East; for there is no such bargainer as he. But he is too close-fisted in the matter of supplies, and his vessel is so ill found that his crew is always half-starved, and half-mutinous. Some day he will press matters a little too far and lose all that he has gained. And the man who is by when Jacob Van Dyer comes to the end of his tricks, is the man who will make his fortune!"

They had crossed the hollow and had come to the foot of the rising path. David looked back and saw that the lean dog had slunk out of the house and was sitting, a black solitary figure, beside the last red coals of the fire.

"I bid you farewell," said Adam Applegate, "and

may good luck follow the *Anna Maria* wheresoever she goes."

As he ceased speaking, the dog raised his voice in a last, long, hideous howl.

They came without misadventure to the cove where they had left the gig. Here Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock embarked with Ben Turner and Tom Brooks, the best oarsman, to make all speed back to the schooner. The others went on to the village, to fetch the boat which had brought the captain ashore and to gather up the first mate and the other seamen. They walked with caution along the rocky path, fearing that the young midshipman might have raised the courage of his sailors and persuaded them to return. Such care, however, was not necessary; for, although even on the landing quay the young officer had sought to turn back his men, he had spoken and even beaten them with the flat of his sword to no avail. He had finally pulled away to his ship to seek further orders from his captain.

The wind was growing heavier and heavier as they all finally came aboard the *Anna Maria.* It still blew from the north, although now and then it swung ominously to the eastward, toward that point from which the harbor offered no protection. It would, however, swing back again; but it continued

to blow with a fury so great that there was little sleep for the crew of the schooner, through all of the night.

"The brig is in worse plight than we," Anthony Churchill shouted to David above the roar of the gale, as they stood together a moment on the deck. "We may thank Adam Applegate that we lie in the only safe anchorage in the harbor."

Long after midnight David lay down upon his bunk, thinking he would rest a little. He was bruised and aching from his battle with the midshipman; while his mind whirled with memories of black devils, of the captain's threats and, to him most sinister of all, of the sight of Jethro Slee. Fitful slumber overtook him at last and he dreamed uneasily for a few hours and woke with a start, to jump up quickly and hasten upon deck.

In the gray of the morning he could make out the brig, storm-lashed and tossed unmercifully by the howling northeast wind.

"She is getting up sail," roared Ben Turner into his ear; "she could not live another hour, with the wind where it is. She will have to put to sea, and belike we will be forced to do the same."

The clouds had broken a little; and the morning grew lighter. Under close-reefed main and foresails, the brig began to beat out of the harbor.

There was so little sea room that the task was a desperate one; now she seemed fairly upon the rocks on one side and now on the other. But she won free at last and stood out to sea, pitching and tossing on the great gray rollers. David, holding his breath, had stood beside Andrew Bardwell to watch her perilous passage.

"There is seamanship for you," said the captain. "The man who commands that ship knows how to handle her, if ever a master did. Now it is time for us to see whether we can do so well."

With her own sails double-reefed, the *Anna Maria* began to feel her way out from her anchorage. It was a more desperate passage even than it had seemed from watching the brig. Once, a shift in the wind carried them so close to the outthrusting rocks that the spray of the breakers blew back upon their decks. Another time the keel grated sickeningly on sand as they came about; there was a moment of uncertainty and then they were free again. The harbor mouth widened before them; they passed the last reef and were fairly at sea.

There was no hope for shelter under the lee of the island, for the wind swept too fiercely across it; and its shallow bowlder-strewn waters on the western shore showed a mile of white boiling surf. There was nothing to do but to put straight out into

the gale. Half a mile away the brig, a gray blot against the heaving gray waters, was fighting her way eastward. It is doubtful if either captain had any memory of the other; since each was battling for his vessel's life.

For forty-eight hours the tempest raged, with thundering waves breaking against the schooner's bow, and with sheets of cold rain blowing across the decks. In David's recollection, afterward, there seemed to have been no time when he ate or rested. He seemed always to be scrambling from one side of the slanted deck to the other; he was always tugging at sheets that would not give; or, with Ben Turner, was fighting to hold the bucking wheel. It must have been that he slept at some chance moments and ate cold food in odd corners; but he could never remember anything but the confusion of shouting voices, the drenching spray that swept with wearying persistence the length of the slippery deck and the endless struggle with ropes and sails. Andrew Bardwell, he knew, never went below; but stood at his post of command with his lined face like iron, issuing his orders without excitement or haste. More than once David felt certain that the schooner must founder; but one look at his captain and the sound of his steady voice would reassure him. It seemed as though Andrew Bardwell,

by pure strength of will, was driving his ship through the furious seas which threatened minute after minute to break her asunder.

At one time, when he and James Babcock happened to be below decks at the same moment, David had opportunity for asking a question that greatly troubled him.

"Do you think," he inquired, "that Adam Applegate had aught to do with this storm?"

"Eh," jerked out Master Babcock, as a lurch of the schooner almost threw him off his feet. "What could Adam Applegate have to do with us? He is left many a long league behind, by now. What has he to do with a tempest like this?"

"The village people said he was a sorcerer," insisted David, "so perhaps he called up the wind to help us."

"Faith, he is a storm-maker of insufficient practice then," returned Master Babcock. "He is like to send us to the bottom with his gale of wind, and leave the brig safely afloat, she being the larger and steadier craft. What made you think he had such power, lad?"

"There were those terrible black devils who drove away the King's men," said David.

James Babcock smiled. Even there in the cabin it was necessary to speak loud, such was the roaring

overhead and the rattling and banging of everything below. But he took time and voice to explain to David that mystery of the sandy hollow.

"It was a strange trick, learned from some Algerine pirate, perhaps, who had it, handed down, from some old Moorish astrologer. Applegate built fires along the beach, so that the wind carried wreaths of smoke throughout the hollow, and made us move backward and forward so that our shadows fell upon the smoke. It looked, I grant you, somewhat eerie from where we stood, and must have been more ghostly yet, viewed from above. Hugh Darrow and Nat Christy enjoyed the sport famously, and ran back and forth, making a vision like twenty devils, who leaped and danced in a manner truly terrifying."

The tempest blew itself out at last, and the angry sea died down to a subdued tumult of broken swells.

It was good to see the sun come breaking through a rift in the clouds and turn the dead gray waters to glistening blue again. There was no sign of the brig; the sea was empty as far as eye could reach; and across it the *Anna Maria* now laid her steady course for the West Indies.

It was not until the day after the storm had come to an end that David found opportunity to give to Captain Bardwell one unreported detail of that last

evening in the harbor. This was the coming on board the *Anna Maria* of Jethro Slee. Andrew Bardwell sat in his chair by the cabin table and heard him out with little comment. David thought that he looked very worn and tired; he had never noticed before how very gray was the hair upon his captain's unbent head.

"It bodes ill for us," Andrew Bardwell said, "that such an enemy should be aboard the English ship. I have often wondered how the captain of the *Dryad* could have got wind of our sailing, and most of all how he knew that we were to touch at Half-Moon Island. That latter fact was known only to two — at the most to three people. Not even you knew of it, David. Of those who did, not one was of the sort who would betray it. If Jethro Slee carried word of that matter to the captain, where did he get the knowledge to do us that ill turn?"

And since there was no answer to that question, discussion came to an end.

David was to realize his dream of green, palmy islands and bays of rainbow-tinted water. The Bermudas looked to him like a sweet green Paradise after the rocky and sandy island they had left, and after the waste of stormy seas between. They lay in a still bay of transparent, colorful water and looked up at the white houses on the hill and the whiter shell

roads leading up from the water's edge. Here they repaired such ravages as the storm had wrought, and here they had word of the brig, which had put in two days before, had accomplished some repairs at record speed, and had sailed again. If they had wished to trade in these pleasant, peaceful islands it would have been impossible; for scarcely had they dropped anchor before revenue officers came aboard and explained to them that the cargo booked for Jamaica could not be broken before that port was reached.

They sailed again in two days and came in due time to the island-dotted waters of the Caribbean. Although they did not meet, anywhere, the brig *Dryad,* as they had expected, they soon had evidence that she had reached the West Indies before them.

They dropped southward through the Windward Passage and made first for Port-au-Prince, but were turned back by a trio of British vessels who were patrolling those waters, apparently waiting for craft on just such errands as the *Anna Maria's.* Having lost sight of the three hostile ships, they laid a course for Martinique, but encountered a tall frigate which signaled them peremptorily to turn back. When the *Anna Maria* did not at once obey, the frigate fired upon her without more ado, and with

a round shot punctured the new white canvas of a jib, before the schooner came about.

"We cannot fight a vessel of that size," said Andrew Bardwell, "nor would it be to the purpose of our voyage to lay the bones of our ship where Amos Dennison laid his. If we cannot make the larger ports, we must try the smaller ones."

But at even the smallest harbors of Guadeloupe, St. Martin and St. Bartholomew, they seemed always to fall in with a British vessel of war, or were forbidden by the customs officers to land a pound of cargo. They skirted the wide curve of the Lesser Antilles, trying this or that tiny isle or hidden port, yet always without success. And, on one small outlying island of the scattered Grenadines, they came upon misfortune of another sort.

They had put in toward shore at evening, looking for water, of which they were in need. Although most of the islets of this group were uninhabited, this one had a little village of thatched houses, at the foot of a round, green hill. A wooded headland reached out a long arm to protect the harbor, and here Andrew Bardwell, for once unwary, since the water about these islands was almost always extremely deep, got his ship aground just off the point, on a bar of sand and mud. Some swollen tropical river had poured into the harbor, deposited

this barrier for unfamiliar ships, and subsided again. The hot darkness fell so quickly that the *Anna Maria's* crew could not be sure whether or no their plight had been seen from the town. Since the tide was just past the ebb, the mishap did not seem a very serious one; for in a few hours they must surely be afloat again.

David was sitting on the deck with Ben Turner, close by the bulwarks. With a lantern between them, Turner was teaching him how to make a long splice. The stranded vessel lay so close to the point that the two could hear the dry rustle of the wind in the palms, and could see the fat, golden fireflies going up and down in the thick undergrowth. Above was the velvet black of the tropical sky, with a great show of yellow stars, seeming to hang so low above the *Anna Maria's* masthead as to be enmeshed in the spars and rigging.

David heard a soft splashing in the water, as though some great fish might be swimming along the side of the ship. He bent once more over his task; then, hearing an unwonted sound close beside him, he looked up and saw the yellow-brown face of a Carib Indian come up over the rail. He never knew by what instinct he was immediately certain that the man was an enemy; but without hesitation he snatched up the lantern and with a swinging blow

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struck it full in the grotesque, grinning face. At the same moment another face appeared, and a lithe brown form vaulted over the rail, to be struck down by Ben Turner, although he, in turn, was armed with nothing more deadly than a long marlin spike. And now all down the deck David could see dark shapes come silently over the side, as though Adam Applegate's black fiends had returned in more real and tangible form. David was the first to raise a shout for help, which brought the watch below tumbling up, buckling pistol belts and tugging at cutlasses. There was a moment of stamping, clashing tumult up and down the deck; then a succession of splashes over the side and all was still again. Only one of the sailors had been wounded by the stab of a knife in his thigh; while a long-limbed Negro lay bleeding beside the foremast.

Captain Bardwell, inspecting one victim after the other, looked gravest as he watched the groaning African.

"Most of these Caribs are friendly enough," he said, "but I have heard that, on some of these islands, runaway slaves have joined with the natives and have persuaded them to swear hatred for all white men. And they have, in truth, bitter enough wrongs to avenge. There were but a dozen in that company which we have beaten off. I think they

came only to measure our strength and to make sure that our vessel was aground."

"It is plain, then," observed James Babcock, who stood beside him, "that these good black gentlemen have but gone to summon their friends and neighbors, and will presently be upon us again. How soon may we hope to be set afloat by the tide?"

"In three hours at the best, possibly not for four or five," returned the captain. "Darrow, make sure the guns are shotted, and do you, David and Nat Christy, go down to bring up more ammunition. Mr. Willets, set the men at their battle stations and deal out more cutlasses. In this darkness steel will be better than powder."

CHAPTER VIII

ADAM APPLEGATE'S WAY

It seemed to David that he had never known such utter stillness as followed the preliminary attack. Even the wind seemed to be hushed; and there came never a rustle or a footfall in the dense bushes of the wooded point. The men on deck stood tense and silent, each one in his appointed place. Only Hugh Darrow was whistling very softly to himself as he worked over the long gun with, apparently, a happy heart in his task. Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock occasionally walked the length of the vessel and whispered to one man or another. The water lapped softly against the ship's side as the hours passed. Even that gentle sound was enough to drown the final approach of the stealthy enemy. It had just begun to seem that the tide might lift them before the attack could be renewed, when, of a sudden, a blood-curdling shout went up from below. The gun spoke with a crashing report and with a red glare that lit up the whole scene of the battle. The onset had begun.

The assailants came swarming over the side, a

wild confusion of leaping forms. Some were armed with spears or clubs, some with slashing knives or swords of strange fashion. David found himself in a desperate encounter with a tall Indian who sought again and again to thrust him through with a short, heavy-pointed spear. Such was the boy's excitement that he discharged both his pistols with little aim, and with no effect. But he succeeded in dodging beneath the unwieldy weapon; and, by attacking the man with his cutlass, drove him, wounded and shrieking, fairly over the side. Then he plunged into a tumult of battle, a mad rush of bare feet and naked black forms. He was fairly deafened by shouts and groans, by reports of pistols, by the clashing of swords against knives and the thudding of clubs and pistol butts; so that he had little knowledge of what was really going on about him and whether the victory swung toward the white men or the black.

He found himself at last on the foredeck where Hugh Darrow, unarmed and unhurried, toiled at the long gun, loading and discharging and loading again.

"Keep them off my back, David," he shouted above the din. "I have swamped three canoes, and there are no more putting out from shore. If we have no further boarders, we shall do well enough.

Only keep them from cutting me asunder while my hands are busy with other toil."

David wondered how he could aim the gun in the dark; but more than one splintering crash and scream in the water below gave evidence of Darrow's marksmanship and of how frequently the shots told.

The guns on the after deck were useless in such a battle, since they could not be deflected; but Hugh Darrow, toiling at the swivel gun, was doing the work of three. By his pursed lips, David could see that he was still whistling his tune, although no sound of it could be heard in the uproar about them. With his cutlass, the boy countered first the stabbing thrust of a stout spear and then the blow of a club which, had either one reached its mark, would have put an end to Hugh's labors forever. But at the third onslaught, that of a misshappen Carib with scarlet rings painted about his eyes and streaks of vermilion on his naked body and with a huge three-cornered knife in his hand, David went down, stabbed through the leg, and rolled over and over helpless among the stamping feet of the fighters.

He lay at last huddled against the rail, striving as far as he could, since he was unable to rise, to keep out of the way of the battle that now surged the most furiously about Hugh Darrow and his

gun. The Carib Indian had been swept past without chance to strike again; but, as David could see by the intermittent flashes, a giant mulatto with an old-fashioned broadsword was raising his weapon for a furious downward blow upon the gunner. And now he saw James Babcock, coatless, with his ruffled white shirt torn and blood-stained, step forward to engage the mulatto with a slim rapier. In the narrow space that cleared about them they fenced in desperate combat, Master Babcock quick, skillful and absolutely calm, the mulatto huge and ponderous, and dealing the thrusts of his great weapon with overwhelming force. David could even see that in his great strength he was as graceful as a bronze statue and as handsome, with straight features and a clean-shaped head. The boy's attention was withdrawn from the skill of the two by the sight of a lean Negro with a wide, heavy blade in his hand, stooping low, and slashing with his clumsy sword as he attacked James Babcock from the rear. David could not get up, but by a tremendous effort he grasped the bent fighter by a knotted wrist and a naked ankle, and, upsetting him, rolled with him, struggling, across the canted deck.

For it was at this moment that the tide lifted the *Anna Maria*. Slowly she first tilted, and then swung free of the bar. David could feel her timbers quiver

as though they were alive, as she slid off the mud and sand and was, all at once, triumphantly afloat once more upon the rising waters.

"Up sail," roared Andrew Bardwell's voice from somewhere in the darkness; and his shout was followed by a straining of ropes and a creaking of blocks. The main sail went up, ghostly white in the darkness, while one splash after another told that the enemy was seeking doubtful safety by jumping overboard. But the battle between James Babcock and the giant of the broadsword went on unchecked. At last David saw the man's weapon struck from his hand and sent flying over the rail into the water. The schooner was now definitely under way, and the decks were almost clear of fighters. James Babcock lowered his point and stood panting.

"You are a good swordsman," he said to the mulatto, "but the moment has come when you must decide whether to be food for the sharks, or swing from the yardarm. Choose quickly."

The fellow was wounded, as David could see, for blood dripped from his fingers, and his hand and arm seemed clothed in a scarlet glove. There was a further trickle down the side of his face. It was evident that he understood English, for, with a flashing smile, he threw up his arm in token of surrender and went over the side in as clean and as

straight a leap as that of the sword that had gone before him.

James Babcock wiped his forehead with his arm and turned to David.

"Are you badly hurt, lad?" he asked. "That fellow behind, who was cutting and slashing at my legs with his machete, as though I were a field of sugar cane, would have spoiled a pretty fight, had you not interfered. I trust he did not nick you with his great carving knife. That mulatto gentleman surely knew well how to handle a sword!"

David arose dizzily, found he could not stand upon his wounded knee, and sat down again.

"I am very little hurt," he said. "Is Captain Bardwell safe? And where is Hugh Darrow?"

Along the decks lay half a score of wounded men, but none mortally hurt. The attacking party had been too rudely armed to inflict any desperate wounds upon the schooner's crew; although there was scarcely a man who had escaped untouched. Andrew Bardwell had a stabbed shoulder; Anthony Churchill, a cheek laid open; Ben Turner, a split head; and Nat Christy was proudly showing to everybody a slashing cut that ran the whole length of his arm. The most serious wound was that of George Willets, who had received a spear thrust in

the side, in which the head of the broken weapon still remained. Hugh Darrow sat on the deck beside his gun, looking very white.

"I can be looked to after the others are tended," he said. "My hurts are not great."

James Babcock, whose surgical skill was to stand the ship in good stead, went from one to the other, binding up the wounds and plastering the broken heads. David, when his leg had been bandaged, was able to limp after him and offer such assistance as he could. He held basins for the washing of cuts, although the sight of the flowing blood turned him somewhat sick, spent and giddy as he already was. He tore up linen for bandages and hobbled back and forth, bringing supplies from Master Babcock's cabin. He could not help shuddering as he aided in sewing up the long cut in Nat Christy's arm; although the patient grinned happily through the whole operation. It was a sickening task to tend Willets as he lay unmoving in his berth, gritting his teeth and saying no word as the spearhead was drawn forth and the wound was dressed.

"You will lie long abed with this," said James Babcock grimly, but Willets, unable to answer, merely shook his head. Two days later he was on deck and about his work again. Nor could any

remonstrances from James Babcock and Andrew Bardwell drive him below.

"And the man will not even oblige me by dying, as I said he would, if he got up," declared Master Babcock later, "but prospers in the most unseemly way, by the disobeying of my orders."

Three of the enemy had been left behind upon the deck; of these, two had pistol wounds in arms or legs and one stout African was somewhat cut about the head but was so grievously frightened that he groaned horribly whenever any one came near. These three were finally put ashore on one of the smaller Grenadines, "whence they can find their way back to their amiable friends," as James Babcock said.

It was not until every other man had been tended, black or white, that Hugh Darrow suffered any one to look to his wounds. He had been slashed in a dozen places and both of his hands had been burned by the hot metal of the gun. He fainted thrice while his hurts were being dressed, but in the intervals of consciousness he matched jokes with James Babcock and jested over David's white-faced horror of his suffering. He was laid by longer than any of the others; but in the end came on deck again, as whole a man as before.

Through all of that night and most of the next

day, there was little done on board the *Anna Maria* save to tend the wounded and do away with the traces of battle. At the end of that time, however, there were enough sound men to get the ship under proper sail.

"And since there seems no place for us to go other than our appointed port," said Captain Bardwell, "we will even lay our course westward and betake us to Jamaica."

David had long looked forward to the sight of that tropic port; but in the end had only a confused impression of the harbor at Kingston, the wide bay, the green hills behind it, the forest of masts and the confusion of tongues along the quays. French, Spanish, and Dutch ships came hither, as well as English vessels and those from the American colonies. There were, moreover, strange craft from the native ports of South America and Mexico; so that the languages spoken made a very Babel in a stranger's ears; and the faces seen were of every shade from white through yellow and brown to inky black.

Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock took David with them, in the capacity of supercargo's clerk, when they went ashore to arrange for the disposal of the *Anna Maria's* cargo. After threading the narrow and misleading streets past a dozen corners

and turnings, they reached their destination and were shown into the countingroom of a certain Jamaican merchant with whom Captain Bardwell had had earlier dealings.

He was a tall, handsome, yellow-skinned and black-eyed gentleman, a British citizen, so he claimed, and a fluent master of English. But, if one judged by his appearance, he was more than half Spanish in blood, with a heavy touch of the "tar brush." His manner was of such exaggerated Spanish politeness that it puzzled and confused David, who was used only to the blunt directness of his fellow New Englanders. The countingroom, also, was far different from the one where he had toiled in Rogersport. This long, shadowy room had whitewashed walls, a shining mahogany floor, and, on one side, square windows with iron grilles and on the other, long doors leading out into a green courtyard. He was at first so occupied in looking about him that he paid little heed to the conversation of the others.

"But, my dear sir," James Babcock said at last, in such a strange tone that it could not but catch David's ear, "at such a price for flour we could scarce afford to sell it in the towns of New England, quite without the expense and labor of bringing it hither to the West Indies."

The yellow-skinned gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"That is your misfortune," he replied easily. "Flour is at present of no very great value in Jamaica."

"And bacon and hams?" queried Andrew Bardwell.

"Alas, the prices of those have fallen even as has flour," was the reply. "If you have salt fish, now, especially some, perhaps, that may have been somewhat spoiled on the journey, and so can be purchased at a small price, we could take that. We are always on the lookout for cheap food for our slaves."

David saw a quiver go over Andrew Bardwell's face which he knew to be anger.

"I think we need treat with you no longer, sir," the captain said, rising. "We will look out some other market for our wares."

"You will find no better one, I warn you," answered the merchant. "I am sorry you should be so hasty in your departure, gentlemen. When you have inquired through Kingston and found no higher prices offered you, I pray you to come back. You will find me a buyer who cherishes no hard feelings. And first, surely, you will drink a glass of wine with me."

"Your wine would choke me, sir," returned Andrew Bardwell abruptly. "Cheap food for slaves! Faugh!"

He strode to the door, leaving James Babcock to make a somewhat more courteous semblance of farewell.

"We are very grateful for the generosity of your offers," Master Babcock said, "but it was not for the purpose of bringing gifts that we of the *Anna Maria* have wended a somewhat difficult way to your island."

"Ah, let it be as you will," replied the merchant. "But before you go, tell me this. Did you present this young man to me by the name of Dennison? Is he of the blood of that Amos Dennison whose ship went down off St. Lucia?"

"His son," James Babcock told him briefly. "Come, David." And he, in turn, strode toward the door.

"Wait," urged the Jamaican. "I have a word to say to this youth. A glass of wine, sir? No? Ah, you stiff-necked New Englanders! Your father once did me a great service, young man. He saved my life."

A service of rather doubtful value, David reflected; but he answered as graciously as he could; while James Babcock fretted and chafed at the door,

and Andrew Bardwell's heavy step sounded loud as he crossed the pavement of the court.

"My father was owner of a plantation on the Island of St. Mary," the merchant explained, "and, kind master as he was, he was victim of an uprising of his ungrateful slaves. I can just remember that terrible night, the wild cries, then the shouting mob about the house, and the flames going up on every side. My good father was killed; but my mother, my two older brothers and I were saved by unexpected help. A Yankee ship was passing; her captain saw the tumult and the fire on shore and came with a boatload of stout seamen to investigate. They fought their way through the murder-hungry black mob, bore my mother and her young sons safely out of the burning house and carried us away in the ship to my mother's brother, here in Jamaica. How that good Master Amos Dennison fought to win us a path down to the boat! But when we were on board and my brothers besought him to turn his ship's guns on the insurgent slaves, he refused. Ah, a strange race you are, you Englishmen that live in America!"

"We of New England do not hold exactly your views in the matter of slaves," said David, with a stiffness of manner which he did not try to conceal.

"Yes, yes, so I have noted. But in return for

that service which your father rendered me, I am about to do you a kindness in return. I am going to tell you a thing that will be of use to you and your comrades; although it is money out of my pocket to do so." He leaned forward and spoke with earnest importance. "Your *Anna Maria* is a marked ship; do you know that? Word has gone about through all the British islands of the Caribbean and possibly even through the French ones, that your purpose is for no good end. It is understood by all of us that you will be permitted to seek no other port than this; and all of the merchants know that you must sell your cargo here or let it rot in your hold."

"But what do they say of our evil purposes?" cried David.

The other shook his head mysteriously. "That I may not tell you. Have I not shown friendship enough by thus warning you that your market is limited and that your ship is watched?"

It is doubtful whether David, in his hasty and perfunctory thanks, did full justice to the man's generosity. James Babcock's acknowledgments were also of the very curtest, as the two, still declining the polite insistence of their host to partake of "one glass of wine", went out through the courtyard, passed the low entrance door with its orna-

mental iron scrolls, and joined Andrew Bardwell in the narrow street.

"Your father made few mistakes, David," declared Master Babcock, when they finally stood without, "but he surely did no very good deed when he saved that fellow's life. He, with his condescending airs and his profession of friendship; with his yellow-brown skin and his oily smile! He might easily be a half-brother to that giant mulatto I fought with on the *Anna Maria's* deck, and the more despicable half at that! We will have no more to do with his like!"

They waited on two other merchants that morning, and, in the course of the next few days, on half a dozen more. Some were somewhat of the pattern of their first acquaintance, some were straight, honest Englishmen; but all were unwilling to buy.

"We do not any of us like to touch the *Anna Maria's* lading," one of the latter told Andrew Bardwell, squarely; but he would offer no explanation of his blunt statement.

James Babcock and David went ashore one festival night, to see the lighted houses, the flower-decked balconies and the torches carried about the streets and squares, which were filled with shouting revelers. There was much gayety and laughter and a great show of dusky beauties, brilliant in finery

that rivaled a peacock's plumage. When at last the two grew weary of the noise and confusion, and were turning to go back to the wharves, they came upon a noisy crowd gathered in a narrow street, hooting and jeering; while from the midst sounded a loud and angry English voice. Pushing their way through the shouting group, they came upon a stout British sailor, sitting upon the ground, his feet helpless in the gutter and his face red with impotent rage, as he attempted to answer in English the rude Spanish and Indian jests that were being hurled at him.

"Are you drunk, friend?" asked James Babcock, with frank directness.

The sailor answered with equal frankness that it was "only in the legs."

"The black-skinned keeper of the drinking shop yonder thought it was a vastly pleasant jest to give me a draught of some devil's brew that would leave my head steady, but that was the undoing of my knees," he explained ruefully, looking up at them in grateful relief for a question in his own tongue. "My mind is clear as a May morning; but my legs are of no use in the world. They have taken all my money while I sit here helpless; and how I am to get back to my ship, I do not know."

"Take his arm, David," directed Master Bab-

cock. "Do you think you can get up with our aid? These fellows will be hurling stones in another moment."

With a great effort the sailor got up, and with slow and difficult progress managed to walk along between them. The jeering crowd followed through a street or two, but soon found new diversion and drifted away. With some struggle and with various stops for rest, James Babcock and David got their charge safely to the waterside. They found the boat belonging to his ship, and sat down on the edge of the wharf, all three of them, to wait until some of the seaman's comrades should come to row him out to his vessel.

He was gunner's mate, he told them, on the frigate lying at the edge of the harbor. He had been long in the service, and had sailed in many seas; and he fell to telling them of some of the vessels he had shipped on, and the adventures he had seen in them.

"Did you ever sail in a ship called the *Pegasus?*" asked David. He spoke the name shyly, as a young man mentions the lady whom he worships from afar.

"Ah, there is a ship!" replied the sailor. "I have not sailed with her, but I have seen her often. They do not build her like in these hurried days. She has had a great history; she was in the engagement off Minorca and she fought under more than

one stout admiral in these West Indian waters. 'Tis a pity that such a vessel should grow old and be broken up at the docks. My hope for her is that she should fight one last, brave battle and go down in glory, as she has always sailed. And from what ship are you, who have done me such a good turn?"

"From the *Anna Maria,*" said David. "Yonder she lies beyond the French merchantman."

"The *Anna Maria!*" echoed the other. He looked up at Master Babcock, who was now standing on the wharf behind him, very dignified and stately, with his cocked hat and plum-colored coat. Then he looked back at David. "Are you sure you said the *Anna Maria?*" he repeated.

"And why not, my good man?" questioned James Babcock sharply.

"There are strange tales of the *Anna Maria* going the rounds of the whole West Indies," the sailor told him solemnly. "Men say all sorts of things of her master and crew; some even declare that they mean to turn pirates and some that they know how to dabble in the black arts. There are none who know truly what your purpose is; but we are all afeared of you."

"And have we the look of pirates, think you?" inquired Master Babcock. "Look me over well, and the boy there too."

The British seaman surveyed James Babcock's imposing figure and then turned to stare at David's wide and honest smile.

"That boy there is no material for a pirate," he agreed, "and you, sir, I ask your pardon for dreaming of such a thing. You have treated me with a kindness that I will not forget; there be few gentlemen like you would stop to look twice at a poor seafaring man with his feet in the gutter. But we none of us know what to make of the *Anna Maria.* There is a tale even that her keel was laid of a Friday!"

"And where did all these stories begin?" James Babcock wished to know.

"The brig, *Dryad,* came in before you, with wild stories of sorcery, and of how, even, the tempest that brought them southward was conjured up by a wizard who dwelt on a lone island and who was your friend. There was a man on the brig who went around, very friendly like, and visited all the ships and talked of little but the *Anna Maria* and her strange ways. The captain, too, sent messages by every ship leaving this harbor that you were to be watched and that any merchant who touched your cargo would get his fingers burned. Why, even the smuggling gentry are afraid to have dealings with you! May I make bold enough to ask whether you

have been able to land anywhere among the Islands save here in Jamaica?"

"Nowhere," David answered him, "except when we ran aground on one of the Grenadines and were attacked by a band of natives."

"And did you fall in with that cutthroat crew, on the island near Granada! It is there every runaway slave in the West Indies takes refuge, and woe betide the white man who falls into the hands of that company of Indians and Negroes. You have had ill luck indeed, but how could it be otherwise, if your keel was laid of a Friday? We have all heard about you, since rumor travels fast, even between islands. It goes as swift as a ship can sail, some say even as the wind can blow. And the whole of the West Indies are gossiping of the *Anna Maria.*"

"So I begin to see," returned James Babcock dryly. "But here, if I mistake not, come your comrades of the frigate. We will bid you a farewell, and leave you a solemn warning not to toss down native drinks in strange ports."

The man tugged at his forelock and attempted to bow respectfully, even though he could not stand up. They left him still trying to stammer his thanks, and walked to the farther quay where their own boat was moored.

Next evening there was an anxious council in the

cabin of the *Anna Maria,* Anthony Churchill, Hugh Darrow and David all being invited to confer with Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock. Each of these had a share, larger or smaller, in the schooner and her lading; so that each must have his word in the matter now to be decided.

"We can dispose of our cargo nowhere save at a grievous loss," began Captain Bardwell. "It seems as though we must give up our hope of gathering a great profit and of buying in John Becket's guns. It is necessary that we make up our several minds what it were best to do next."

"We have tried all ports," agreed Anthony Churchill, "and, from what we have seen and heard, we can be sure that trade is to be denied us wherever we go."

There was a little silence, since nobody for a moment seemed to have aught to say.

"There remains," said James Babcock softly, "the counsel given us by Adam Applegate. He said that when other hope failed, we might turn back to his advice. And, so it now seems to me, the time for that has come."

David saw Hugh Darrow's eyes light up, as he nodded but did not speak.

"I did not think too well of either Adam Applegate or his words," said Andrew Bardwell. "But

since all else has failed us, I know not what other thing to do. Master Babcock, it is plain, is for the following of that counsel. And the rest of you, who are owners, with us, of this ship and her lading, must speak your wish in this matter. Hugh Darrow, what is your desire?"

"Ah, I am of the opinion of Master Babcock and Adam Applegate," answered Hugh quickly. "Where can we do better than following the path of the trade wind?"

Andrew Bardwell spoke slowly.

"I thought you would stand thus," he said in a tone touched with regret. "And you, David, what is your will?"

"I would do only what is your wish, Master Bardwell," said David.

The question had gone from one to another around the table and came now to the last, Anthony Churchill. When Andrew Bardwell turned to him, he was silent for a long minute; then spoke at last.

"I would follow Adam Applegate's way," he said. "It may not seem the straightest of roads; but it should lead us, in the end, to the service of our country. Of that I am certain."

"So be it then," answered Andrew Bardwell.

He pushed back his chair; and David felt sure

that he did so to be out of the light of the swinging lantern, and that no one might see the doubt and trouble upon his face. But the faces of the others held no doubt; they were all eagerness and excitement. James Babcock stood up, and lifted a glass of the wine that Nat Christy had set upon the table.

"I drink," he said, "to Captain Bardwell and to a brave company, gentlemen adventurers all."

Preparations began accordingly on the next day for the new venture. A part of the cargo was sold at the grievous sacrifice demanded by the merchants of Kingston; and the proceeds were expended in purchasing tobacco, sugar, coconuts, limes, lemons and the few dried fruits which the natives knew how to prepare. The yellow-skinned gentleman who claimed to owe his life to Amos Dennison was consumed with curiosity concerning the purpose of all this buying. He even paid Andrew Bardwell a visit on board the *Anna Maria* under pretense of offering to sell him oranges at an advantageous price, but in reality to try to find out what he planned to do with such a miscellaneous cargo. He got little courtesy and even less satisfaction. By the end of a week, the purchases were made, the new goods were stored on board and the schooner was got ready to clear, officially, for British-ruled ports on the Mediterranean.

It was upon an early morning of brilliant sunshine and mild airs that the *Anna Maria* stood out from the harbor of Kingston, with many a curious and suspicious eye watching her departure. She had unfurled every stitch of canvas as she got into the seaway; so that Adam Applegate's sails, topsails and staysails were up and drawing full as she stretched away on her new voyage, seeking the broad blue highroad of the trade winds.

CHAPTER IX

THE *YELLOW TULIP*

"This," so Ben Turner told David, "is what a voyage should be!"

Day had followed day with clean, unclouded weather, with the steady, fresh wind always blowing, and with the ship driving unhesitatingly upon her course. Lying flat upon the forward deck, David could look out through the cloud of spray under her bowsprit, where a brilliant rainbow always hung, and could watch the broad restless plain of the sea, blue in the far reaches, green in the hollows of the marching waves. There was always the feeling of vigorous life in the salt air, always a sparkle on the water, always endless dancing whitecaps and always the wonder as to what adventure lay beyond the horizon.

"If we had but a full-rigged ship now, a brig, or a frigate, what time we could make and what ports we would dare to seek!" Ben Turner sighed.

David dreamed also of another ship. In his heart he was once more picturing himself as commander of the great *Pegasus*, plowing these shining seas

and bound upon some momentous errand. Or she might be coming up to turn the tide of some great sea fight, in which one mighty, white-sailed fleet engaged another, making the whole world ring with their daring feats of battle. He thought of Janet, too, and wondered whether she could have followed him in thought along his adventurous way. He had written her a letter from Kingston; but had felt that he must speak vaguely of their whereabouts and of what they had been doing. He had thought, as he had stood in the blazing sunshine on the hot quay, and had put the missive into the hand of a sailor whose ship was bound northward, that the letter could never find its way to that far New England town, where the skies would now be gray and cold, and where the sharp snow-flurries would be rattling against the windows. The cool, little parlor where he had sat down to write his letter of farewell would be lit now by the blazing fire on the hearth, with the cat and the parrot blinking before it. Janet would be sitting in its ruddy light, twirling her polished spinning-wheel. Would she be thinking of him, and could she ever picture where he was and what he was about?

"Sail, ho!" His daydream was shattered into a hundred bits by the cry from the lookout. David was in the shrouds and mounting to the crow's-

nest in a moment. They had left behind the traffic that went in and out amongst the West India Islands and had spoken no ship for some days.

Three vessels were approaching, craft of a sort that David had never before seen. Tom Brooks, who was the lookout, told him that they were Portuguese feluccas, coming up on the homeward course from a voyage to Brazil. At a distance, David thought them strange and graceful craft, with their slim, pointed sails, long and tapering like sea bird's wings. When they came closer and he could see their high curving sterns and thin upturned prows, he still thought that they had a fantastic beauty, in spite of their battered timber work and dingy sails. Swift, flitting things they were, as they came alongside and rounded to under the lee of the schooner, as easily as dipping gulls. The largest of the three lowered a boat of as strange a fashion as she was herself. In it the captain of the tiny fleet, with a boat's crew of dark-faced, grinning sailors, came rowing across to have speech with the *Anna Maria.*

There was no need to talk to him of trading, for his first words asked desperately whether they had any ship's bread that it would be possible to spare to him. His brown face brightened, and his white teeth flashed in the broadest of smiles, when he heard

that the *Anna Maria* carried flour, and could sell him all he required. Negotiations were carried on in Lingua Franca, that polyglot tongue which was spoken by all the traders of the Mediterranean ports, and which Andrew Bardwell seemed to know sufficiently well for all practical uses.

When he found that he was understood, the Portuguese skipper launched into a vivid narrative of their voyage; how they had traded first with the natives on the shores of Africa, and had then crossed and visited various portions of the South American coast. They had been so long away from their home ports that ordinary supplies had failed entirely. James Babcock exclaimed in horror over the description of their weevil-filled ship's bread and their rotted salt meat, even though he heard of it only in translation. When the would-be purchaser was taken down into the hold, that he might see what there was for his use, he threw up his hands in delight at the sight of the great number of flour casks, and burst into such a chatter of excited speech that even Andrew Bardwell could scarcely follow what he said. When he had at last given full expression to his surprise and pleasure, he straightway fell to bargaining for as much of the flour as his three little vessels could carry. He explained that in a certain South American port — he did not give its name,

fearing evidently that the *Anna Maria* might immediately make all sail thither — a revolution had broken out just as he was departing for his homeward voyage. He cared very little which side should prove victorious; but, so he explained, "after there is fighting there is always hunger, and winners and losers will both alike be in need of bread."

He offered Andrew Bardwell a price that made David's eyes open wide with surprise, as he set it down in his book. When half of the *Anna Maria's* store of flour had been transferred to the three feluccas, David went on board the largest vessel, with Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock, to receive payment.

"We have made a profitable voyage," the Portuguese captain told them, "but our cargo is not of the sort that fills much space. Therefore we can still find room for your northern flour and can carry it back to South America with chances of good profit. But you must choose in what form I shall pay you; for money of your kind I have none."

They were led down into the felucca's cabin, which was so low that they could scarcely stand upright, and which seemed an abiding place for all the strange and dreadful ship smells of which David had ever dreamed. Here the small brown man, talking unceasingly every moment until he reminded

David in some quaint way of Aunt Candace, opened one locker after another and showed them such treasures as made David stare in wonder.

"I can pay you in ivory or gold dust or diamonds," he declared in matter-of-fact tones, "and there is bar silver in the hold and I have here gold coins that pass current in South America."

Captain Bardwell shook his head when the Portuguese showed him a wooden box, which, on being opened, revealed a handful of dazzling brilliance of white and yellow sparkles.

"Brazilian diamonds are not for us," he said. "They are not so easy for casual traders to dispose of."

"There is a Jewish merchant in Tangier," returned the brown-faced captain, "by name Benoni. He is the man of all others to buy jewels, if only you know how to trade with him."

"I have had dealings with that same fellow," answered Andrew Bardwell. "I have traded in all the Mediterranean ports, and I know who buys and sells to the best advantage in most of them. Nevertheless, I would rather not have your diamonds."

In the end, exchange was made with a medley of articles. There was a great white tusk of ivory and a heap of gold coins, rudely shaped and stamped with the figures of strange beasts and birds, treasure

from the store of some long-dead Inca beyond the Andes. The final balance was weighed out in gold dust and carried away by David in a small leather bag. After the negotiations were ended, the Portuguese captain poured out for each of them a glass of golden wine, which looked like mellow sunshine. David, who was no connoisseur, tasted it and thought vaguely that it was not so nasty as other wines which politeness had forced him to swallow. But Master Babcock, who knew more of such matters, seemed to believe that the drinking of such a draught was an event of a lifetime.

"I would that I could tell our good friend," said he, "that the smells of his cabin, which I have been thinking of as infinite and odious, are all forgotten in the perfection of his wine."

The little brown captain was more talkative than ever over the glasses; so that Andrew Bardwell for several days after was still recounting to the others the different things that he had said. It seemed that his great desire had always been to double the African Cape — he called it by its old name of the Cape of Storms. His weatherwise little vessels might have managed it; but they were not large enough to carry supplies for the long journey to India or the Spice Islands. Even the larger ships often ran short, since there were few places to gather

provisions along the way. It was true that at the Dutch colony on the southernmost point of the Cape vessels might be refitted and revictualed.

"But the Dutch are earnest traders, especially at Capetown," he added. "They demand ready money for their supplies; and ships coming back from the Orient often have little of that. In the matter of barter, they would make a pirate blush. They say that they have little use for the goods of the East; and with shipmasters other than their own countrymen, their brief word is 'Hard money or no trade.' You have seen to what a pass I had come; you will find many vessels in similar state sailing up the coast of Africa. If you can trade with them, and if you do not fall into the hands of the Barbary pirates, you should do well. And if you should meet with Jacob Van Dyer —"

David, hearing the name that Adam Applegate had spoken, looked up with such sudden interest that the Portuguese captain seemed to take alarm and would say no more of the Dutch trader. He told them of one or two places where they might hope to land safely on the African shore to fill up their water casks.

"But it were best not to try to trade with the natives or to touch the ivory traffic, white or black," he warned them. "That is only for men long bred

to it, and even for them there is often disaster."

The interview came to an end, and with many bows and polite gestures and much grinning of white teeth, the visitors were conducted to their boat. David was glad to breathe the fresh air again; but Master Babcock then and for several days after still seemed to have forgotten the vile odors of the felucca's cabin in the unexpected excellence of the Portuguese captain's wine.

They parted company with the little fleet and once more sailed eastward. The next vessel with which they fell in was a British ship-of-the-line, whose captain, to their great relief, evidently had not heard of the *Anna Maria* and her far-reaching reputation. He sent an officer on board who came to inquire into their cargo and their destination, and who showed himself both satisfied and agreeable. He was anxious to hear what news they had brought from the West Indies, and he was glad to buy of them oranges for the officers' cabin, and tobacco and rum for the men.

"Our supply of grog was running short," he said, "and the men were grumbling until it made life a burden to listen to them. A ship may as well go to the bottom as be short of rum, so the seamen say."

He paid them in good, golden guineas, the only coin of ordinary commerce that they had seen, or

were to see in the whole of the voyage. He bade them farewell in friendly fashion, and sailed away with a shipful of broadly smiling mariners, whose terrible fears of being deprived of grog and tobacco had been so fortunately relieved.

The seas were empty for many days thereafter, although Ben Turner, once when he was on lookout with David, insisted that he saw a sail and that it was a pirate's.

"But a schooner of New England build and armed fore and aft is no great prize in a pirate's eye," he said. "There is no wealth of money or cargo in such a craft to tempt them to attack. Pirates are not what they were in my young days," he concluded, with a sigh that was almost regretful. "They were bolder then, for the prizes were greater, and a man might be rich for life from the plunder of one treasure ship."

They saw one vessel which seemed to David to have sailed into his view out of those tales of the past told him by Adam Applegate. She was a Spanish ship, much higher of poop than of prow, with a deep well between, and with long rows of gun ports from her sharp beakhead to her carved stern castle. There was no beauty of gilding, or vividness of color in her carvings and figurehead; and her great baggy sails were gray rather than white. She had belonged

to those treasure fleets that carried home the fabulous riches of Mexico and Peru to upbuild the glories of Spain. But as the Inca and Aztec treasure houses had been stripped, the wealth of the empire had declined, and this worn and battered vessel stood for the fading glories of proud Spain.

"You can read a nation's history in the build and rigging of her ships," said Ben Turner to David, as they stood at the rail, watching her. She seemed to have no wish to speak with their little craft but went by unheeding. She passed at early morning across a silver sea and against a rainbow sky, a vision of the dying splendor of a commerce whose day had come to an end.

In the turbulent passage of the "Roaring Forties," they saw a few other ships of various kinds; but did not trade with more than one or two. Coming at last to the end of the eastward journey, they touched at the Cape Verde Islands. Here they bought new supplies mostly of fresh and dried fruits, with the British commander's guineas, and headed southward along the route toward the Cape. It was a far and perilous voyage for so small a vessel; but, since they had come so great a distance without mishap, there was no reason why they should not go farther. And now, as both Adam Applegate and the Portuguese captain had foretold, they began to

meet the great East Indiamen homeward bound with the riches of the East for cargo. So far, no American vessel had ever ventured into the trade with the Orient; therefore these tall, swift ships were something wholly new to David's eyes. There were some Spanish and Genoese, a few French, but more Dutch and English ships.

"The Spaniards build their vessels on the oldest lines, and the French on the newest," Andrew Bardwell told David, as they were watching a great ship pass. "The Dutch shipbuilders have long followed models both sure and bold; while the English take note of each and use the best points of them all. And the shipwrights in the American colonies are treading hard upon the heels of the English; and out of our land of sturdy oak trees and towering pines and daring spirits there should come some day the finest ships in the world."

The sight of a schooner of Yankee build in these waters was so strange a thing that nearly every vessel, out of mere curiosity, lay to for the sake of having speech with her. There were many who were glad to avail themselves of the chance of renewing their spent supplies, when the required articles could be exchanged for goods of the Orient at a decent rate of profit. Many had sought to fill their needs at the Capetown settlement, but either had

been unable to buy for lack of ready money, or had been unwilling to yield to Dutch rapacity.

Even the Dutch ships had various needs, their captains having been a thought too thrifty in calculating the wants of the crew. Some took flour, some fruit, some wanted rum, while some were out of such small necessities as oil and candles.

It was David's privilege to go on board many a vessel with James Babcock or Andrew Bardwell, and help in intricate bargainings in silks and spices, chests of tea and good-smelling straw sacks of coffee. He saw Spanish ships which had sought in the East a substitute for that commerce which greed and cruelty had brought to its downfall in the West. The same fierce avarice had marked the Spanish trader wherever he went, and he had fared ill in the Orient. There were ships from Genoa, that city of centuries-old wealth, founded on the trade of the Mediterranean and the overland routes to India. When that traffic had declined and her wealth and glory had faded, she had not, like other Italian cities, settled down to stately decay, but had reached out for the new commerce that took its bold way around the Cape. The effort, however, was a failing one; the new trade was destined for newer peoples; and the stately and ornamented ships of the proud city would presently sail the seas no

more. Not many Frenchmen had yet turned their eyes to the East; so that between the Dutch and the English was divided the goodly part of the whole commerce.

David could hardly believe his delighted eyes when he was allowed to go on board one vessel whose lading was rare and precious indeed. By the terms of an old treaty, the Dutch were permitted to send one ship a year to Japan, a country so far away and so shut out from the world that it seemed a region almost fabulous. Such wares as the good-natured Dutch captain showed them! There were ivories carved as delicately as though they were lace, silk embroideries, chests of sandalwood whose sweet perfume seemed to fill the whole ship. The English ships were briefer in their bargaining than the Dutch, but they were as eager to trade in their necessity, and asked few questions as to the Yankee schooner's business on such far seas.

More than one of the ship's masters, hearing David's name, asked if he were the son of Captain Amos Dennison, and showed him special kindness and interest when they heard that he was. Listening to their talk, David could easily picture the myrrh, aloes and cassia, the vestures of gold, the ivory palaces, and the monstrous idols staring with jeweled eyes, visions of which had led his father out

of the meetinghouse on a bleak New England hill, to cross these strange, far seas. Those at home had heard only of Master Dennison, sometime seafaring man and now stern and sedate master of a countinghouse; but all of the East seemed to have known young Captain Amos Dennison, who had carried gifts to a king.

Slowly those homely products of fish and flour and New England rum, the sugar and the tobacco that had been taken on at Jamaica, were being replaced by bales of silk and nankeen, by spices and pepper, by all the varied, strange-smelling and curious goods of the East. They even bartered away most of their spars and rope and tackle, of which Andrew Bardwell had brought a provident supply. They had coasted many leagues down the green, steaming continent of Africa, and had even dared to go ashore on a few occasions to refill their water casks, at those places where the Portuguese captain had told them it could be done with comparative safety.

They had passed one ship standing out from the mouth of a great sluggish river, and the wind, blowing from her to them, had brought to them a hideous and unnameable odor.

"That is a slave ship," said Andrew Bardwell. "We will have no traffic with her." It was long

before David could lose from his memory that ghastly smell of close-packed, reeking humanity.

On one hot morning when the long swells were smooth as oil, and the *Anna Maria* drove lazily southward as though she were beginning to grow weary of her journey, Andrew Bardwell beckoned to David, as both stood watching a ship that was approaching them on a long tack from the leeward.

"You can always tell a Dutchman by the size of her jibs," the captain said. "The Dutch were the first to try the three-cornered sails, and they are the boldest in using them."

"Faith, hers are as ample as must be the breeches of her master," observed James Babcock, coming up to them. "And a strange shabby ship she looks to be."

The vessel came steadily upon her course, moving quickly in spite of the light wind. She had a great patch upon her foresail, and her main topgallant sail was missing entirely, although all the rest of her canvas was set and drawing. She came nearer and nearer, until they could see a few men moving sluggishly about her decks and a square figure in broad hat and wide breeches standing high in the stern. Her paintwork was so worn and blistered that it was only barely possible to tell that her upper works had once been colored yellow.

"Upon my life," cried Andrew Bardwell, as the big vessel came close, "that can be none other than the *Yellow Tulip*. It is the ship of Jacob Van Dyer!"

The *Anna Maria* lowered her cutter as the other vessel lay to, rocking ponderously on the swells. It had been found that time was saved by loading a boat at once with provisions; since they were almost always asked for as soon as the schooner's messengers arrived on board. David and Anthony Churchill sat in the stern sheets and, as they came under the vessel's side, looked up to the broad face of her commander, who leaned over the rail to speak to them. He made no move to invite them aboard.

"What have you there?" he asked in Dutch.

David was used to this question, and had learned enough to be able to tell him in his own tongue what they had brought. While he talked, he saw various faces come peering over the rail, as the crew gathered to look down into their boat. Such a starved, desperate, scarecrow company he had never before seen. Their clothes were so ragged that several of the seamen were almost naked; others showed the blotched and sunken countenances of men suffering from scurvy. The crew did not speak much together, but stared with strained eyes at the boat, piled high as it was with casks of flour, with coco-

nuts, with bags of tobacco and nets of green limes.

After David had finished enumerating his goods, there was a long pause; since Jacob Van Dyer seemed to be a gentleman of most unready speech.

"How much?" he said at last. To this question, David had also sufficient knowledge to reply. Very slowly the Dutch captain shook his head.

"Too much," he said briefly. He waited for a little, evidently expecting David to offer him a lower price. David waited as well, since it was not the fashion of Andrew Bardwell to permit dickering over his sales.

"Too much," repeated the Dutchman, after some minutes more.

David consulted in an undertone with his companion.

"I never saw such a starved and wretched crew," said Anthony. "They have doubtless had no healthy food or clean drink for months. Half the men look to be sick with scurvy as a result. And yet their skinflint captain, before their very eyes, denies them the decent provisions which would make them whole."

They waited a little longer, while Jacob Van Dyer still stood staring fixedly at them. Once he opened his mouth as though to speak, then closed it obstinately and shook his head.

"There is nothing for it but to go back," said Anthony.

The oars dipped, the head of the boat swung round, and the sailors of the *Anna Maria* rowed away from the *Yellow Tulip*. David heard a groan go up from one of the men on deck. He still thought that Jacob Van Dyer would call to them to return, but that impassive face under the broad hat stared dully after them and never opened its lips.

The vessels drew slowly apart, although the wind was so light that neither made great speed. At mid-afternoon the Dutch ship was still in sight and, as Hugh Darrow pointed out to David, was beginning to tack strangely. She was certainly no longer moving on her former course, and at last, as they watched her, seemed to be making no way at all, but kept coming up into the wind, dropping away from it, swinging about, and coming up again. Andrew Bardwell and George Willets were watching her through the glass, but could make little of her; although Willets declared at one point that he saw a puff of smoke go up from her deck. As dusk began to fall, he found her with the glass again and declared that she had come clean about and was making sail toward them. Darkness came too quickly, however, for any one to make sure whether this was really true.

It was too hot to lie below, David thought; so he remained upon deck late into the warm, starry night. He was talking with Anthony Churchill; for both were at work with the nocturnal, taking observations and comparing their results. David interrupted their discussion to listen intently.

"I hear the sound of oars," he said.

A vague bulk in the dark, perhaps a quarter of a mile away, seemed to show that the *Yellow Tulip* had indeed overhauled the schooner. Between them and the dark ship the splashing of oars was unmistakably coming nearer and nearer. A faint hail drifted across the water and finally sounded again, close under the side of the *Anna Maria.*

"It was a single pair of oars," said Anthony, "and I believe that there is but one man in the boat."

They went to the rail and watched a slow, heavy figure come climbing over the side. It was the Dutch captain, and he had indeed come alone. He was breathing hard; his broad hat was gone, and was replaced by a bloody bandage. There flashed quickly into David's mind those words of Adam Applegate:

"The man who is by when Jacob Van Dyer comes to the end of his tricks is the man who will make his fortune!"

CHAPTER X

THE JEWEL BOX

It was a much shaken and almost speechless Dutch captain who was conducted by David and Anthony into Andrew Bardwell's cabin and there given both refreshment and surgical aid. The wound in his head had been bound up clumsily with a dirty rag; and the blood was still running down the side of his neck and over his much-damaged coat.

He sat by the table for some time, staring stupidly at the faces about him under the yellow lantern light. At last he began, slowly, to give a halting account of what had happened, speaking partly in Dutch and partly in a grotesque tongue that he apparently imagined to be English. David, from the small amount of Dutch he had already picked up, from the translations, in quick asides, that James Babcock and Andrew Bardwell, both masters of the language, gave him, and from his guesses at what the English was meant to be, was able to make out almost the whole of the story.

Even through the meager words that he under-

stood, there loomed the truth, dark and horrible, of what Jacob Van Dyer had been to his sailors. It was scarcely believable,— the cruelties he had practiced, the vengeance his men had sought to visit upon him in requital, and the unbroken will with which he had still mastered them! There had been a mutiny, a flaming forth of the hatred that for months had crept and smoldered throughout the ship. Cruel treatment and underfeeding were the ordinary usage of those times; but on Jacob Van Dyer's vessel both had been carried far beyond even the usual hard custom. Beaten and broken men they were who had risen in sudden desperate revolt; and against them all Jacob Van Dyer had fought alone. There was no single hand raised on his side on the *Yellow Tulip;* for even his officers had been so abused that they had chosen to cast in their lot with the men.

The ship had been well enough supplied, he told them, when it left Ceylon; although it was not his practice to give up too much of the cargo room to extra food for the crew. He flattered himself that he knew well what was enough to keep the men, and he would waste no space or money on unnecessary provisions. The voyage had been a slow, hot one, and the supplies had dwindled and spoiled. The rum and tobacco had been exhausted long ago, the salt

pork had rotted and the ship's biscuit was almost gone. With such nourishment, it was not surprising that the crew had sickened, one after another.

Evidently the men had hoped that a stop would be made at Capetown and new supplies taken on. Owing to some trouble, on the outward voyage, with the authorities there, the good Jacob had decided to give the Settlements a wide berth, and had doubled the Cape without touching land. There was still enough food, " of a certain sort ", to carry them home. It was plain, from the hints the slow Dutchman let fall, that it took more and more cruel measures to drive the men to their labor.

He sat there, telling his tale in unchanging tones, evidently sure that he had acted as any ship's captain would, and that Captain Bardwell would have done the same. He seemed quite unconscious that James Babcock drew away until he sat with the whole length of the table between them. Andrew Bardwell, however, heard the tale out with no change of countenance. David knew that, in his day, he had shipped in the forecastle of much such vessels as the *Yellow Tulip,* and that such a narrative held no surprises for him.

" Go on," he said briefly in Dutch, when the man paused, and Van Dyer resumed his story.

It seemed that it was the sight of the boatload of

provisions sent from the *Anna Maria* which had broken the men's apathy at last. To see the clean food, the fresh fruits that were sure remedy for the disease that was scourging the ship had been too much for officers or men to endure. Jacob Van Dyer had lain down in his cabin to sleep in the hot hour of the afternoon—"and I'll warrant it was after a rich dinner of his own, and a flagon of good wine," observed Master Babcock, in a hasty undertone to David.

The hated captain had awakened to find himself barricaded in his cabin and the ship in the hands of the officers and crew.

"I broke open the door," he said, "and there they were just outside, the whole company of them. I had not thought the starved creatures would have such fight in them. I knocked down two; but more kept coming on in the place of those who fell."

David could picture the desperate encounter in the narrow confines of the cabin doorway: Jacob Van Dyer, a slow, heavy man in a tremendous rage, battling silently for his life with all his gigantic strength, the crowded seamen pressing hard upon him, justly vehement to shed the blood of the man who had so fearfully ill-used them. They bore him back at last, wounded and exhausted, but still so terrible a figure of wrath and determination that

there was no one who dared lift his hand to give the final blow. They had rifled the cabin. "They did not touch my gold and other possessions," said Van Dyer; "but how they fell upon the food and wine!" It was as James Babcock had thought: the cabin was well supplied with every delicacy of meat and drink, while the forecastle was starving.

But meat for one man could not go far toward feeding a whole crew; and after the men had feasted and drunk, they came upon him again. Even now, however, he still beat them off, and they had retired in disorder, once more barring the door behind them.

"And by then I was nearly spent," confessed Jacob.

He had sat upon the side of his bunk and had seen presently a trickle of some pungent-smelling liquid come creeping under the closed door. The sailors had broken a bottle of Hollands, and had poured the contents through the crack. Then the trickle of liquor had been followed by a trickle of flame, for the men had applied a spark outside and set the fire running along the dry wood. The voice of the first mate, calling through the door, had told him that it was their intention to set fire to the *Yellow Tulip,* to take to the boats and leave him to burn with his ship.

At that, Jacob Van Dyer had offered to make

terms. Trapped and wounded, knowing he was beaten, he still outdid them by the force of his will and the power of his cunning. If they would put about and overtake the *Anna Maria,* he would, so he promised, go aboard alone and arrange for the purchase of all the provisions that they should need.

"I made them see," explained Jacob to Andrew Bardwell, "that you, as captain of this schooner, could not deal with a mutinous crew, and that their only hope of buying from you was by my good offices. So I came hither in a boat alone." For the first time his broad face showed the flicker of a smile. "The great joke of it is, they think I will come back."

"And do you not intend it?" cried James Babcock, leaning forward in his chair.

"No," answered Jacob Van Dyer.

Andrew Bardwell's face had scarcely changed. It was whiter than its wont, while James Babcock's had flamed scarlet with anger. Captain Bardwell's command of Dutch was less ready than Master Babcock's, so that he spoke more slowly. That very slowness emphasized the determination of his words.

"You will go back," he said, "or I will myself serve you as you have served your unhappy seamen. You must choose between keeping your word, Jacob

Van Dyer, or being flogged within sight of your own vessel."

The Dutch captain's heavy face went pasty white.

"You — you would do that to me?" he stammered. "You cannot. You are skipper of a miserable little schooner and I am a master of a great ship."

"You chose to come aboard my vessel alone," answered Andrew Bardwell, "and you put yourself into my hands. Decide quickly."

Van Dyer sought to temporize.

"If I take back provisions to my men," he said, "will you then take me once more aboard of your vessel and carry me to safety? When my crew is strong and well-fed once more, my life will be in even greater danger, for the men will hate me as much as ever."

"I will do that," agreed Captain Bardwell. "It would be sheer butchery to force you to stay amongst them."

James Babcock shook his head and tried to protest.

"Do we wish to be responsible for such a dog?" he exclaimed.

"We have no other choice," returned Andrew Bardwell. "We do not wish to lend ourselves to murder."

Jacob Van Dyer, seeming to feel quite secure in the protection of Captain Bardwell, interrupted their colloquy.

"You need not think," he said cunningly, "that if you force me to take back provisions to the *Yellow Tulip,* that I shall be obliged to pay you for them."

"You will surely pay us for them," said Andrew Bardwell. "Let that matter be made plain at once."

"But those rascals have stripped me of all that I possess," expostulated Van Dyer.

Master Babcock, at this point, joined in the talk.

"When you came aboard of us," he stated shrewdly, "you had assuredly made up your mind to demand that we put you ashore, or that we carry you home to some port of your choosing. You had made ready to pay us for that service, little, if might be, much, if our avarice proved as great as your own. Somewhere inside of that torn shirt, or within the folds of those broad breeches, you have hidden sufficient wealth to buy the safety of your cowardly skin. Although it is a worthless one, you, mistakenly, value it very high."

His Dutch was more fluent than Andrew Bardwell's. Jacob Van Dyer stared and blinked at him, and made no answer. At last he reached inside the

belt of those ample breeches and after some fumbling brought out a succession of small packages, each wrapped in silk, and firmly tied with scarlet cord. These he flung upon the table toward Captain Bardwell.

"What is this?" asked Master Babcock sharply.

"Opium," was the other's reply. "I brought away with me as much opium as would equal in value your whole cargo. I will pay you with it, both for food for the *Yellow Tulip,* and for putting me ashore at some place which I shall choose. I will pay you well," he repeated, evidently uneasy at the sight of Andrew Bardwell's stern face. "You need not fear that you will lose by having to do with me."

He asked if they remembered how, sixty leagues to the northward, a big, lazy river fell into the sea. It was there that he wished to be set on shore. He had a friend at that place, he said, who traded in gold and ivory and other things, and who would gladly shelter him. Would they see that he got safely thither? And he repeated his former question: Would Captain Bardwell once more pledge his word that, if the brave Jacob went back to the *Yellow Tulip* with supplies, he should be well guarded? It must be a part of the bargain that he was to be brought back, without harm, to the *Anna Maria.*

With all this Andrew Bardwell complied, evidently anxious to end the interview.

"Put up your precious opium, man," said James Babcock in a tone of disgust. "We do not take our pay in death-dealing drugs. But if you are willing to recompense us, that is sufficient. You will doubtless find, either in your own cabin or upon your well-supplied person, the means to make us decent payment. David, bring out our cargo lists. We will see what we can send to these unfortunate men. Captain Van Dyer is about to purchase for them all that we can spare, and the very best that we have."

A stifled groan burst from the lips of the suffering Jacob as he heard these words, even though James Babcock had spoken to David in English. He sat listening while the two made up the list of provisions; and he more than once seemed about to protest, but in the end let forth from time to time only a mournful, heavy sigh. When, finally, there was read to him the whole amount of what they were to send and the total of its value, he groaned again; but, catching James Babcock's fierce eye, he faltered out:

"I agree."

David, with Ben Turner and Tom Brooks, went down into the hold to sort out the casks and boxes and the bags of fruit that were swung up through

the hatchway and piled in the boat to be carried to the *Yellow Tulip*. To his great disappointment, the boy found when he came on deck again that the boat had been already loaded and that he had not been detailed to go with it. Hugh Darrow pulled one of the oars, as they rowed away into the dark, and Anthony Churchill sat beside Master Babcock in the stern.

"Van Dyer must have fought like a demon, and the men, starved and sick as they were, must have fallen upon him with the fury of starved beasts," Hugh Darrow told David later. "But it was strange to see how they still feared old Jacob, not knowing that he was in terror of them. While Mr. Churchill went down into the forecastle to look to some men who were too sick to come above decks, I tried to find excuse for going down to the captain's cabin, to see at least the place of so fierce a struggle. At the foot of the companionway the doors were splintered and the lockers smashed open; but within an inner cupboard old Jacob must have hidden away some treasures that the mutineers did not find. I heard Master Babcock exclaim, and then there was the sound of a metal box clapped to, before they both came out and Captain Van Dyer, with a face like a thundercloud, asked me in what he calls English, what was my business. It was well that I had

sought out Master Babcock with a real errand, or the honest Dutchman would have had me overboard for spying upon his secrets."

When Jacob Van Dyer once more came aboard, David stared at him with horrified eyes, wondering how that stolid man could have wrought such evil and still seem so utterly unmoved. From the deck they all watched the *Yellow Tulip* as, in the early morning, she got up sail again, and slowly swung about into the course she had been following when first the *Anna Maria* encountered her. The strange negotiations had taken the whole of the night; so that the sun was coming up behind the Dutch ship, as David watched her gray patched sails being spread to the morning breeze.

She stood away, moving steadily across the pale-blue waters. The new master, whomever the mutineers had chosen, handled his vessel well, as she set forth, leaving her old and evil captain behind. The whole company on the *Anna Maria* had crowded to the rail to watch her go. All alone in the stern of the schooner there stood one solitary figure, shunned by all the others, and left by himself to watch his vessel sail away. It is hard for a master to lose his ship, whether by wreck, or fire, or mutiny. But if Jacob Van Dyer showed aught of emotion at that dark hour, there was no man near to see it.

It was necessary for David to sleep in the forecastle; for the Dutch captain was occupying his berth aft. To every one on the schooner his presence was irksome; so that it was a relief to all to see what good speed they were making north toward that river where Jacob wished to seek his friend. It was that same wide, slow river out of which they had seen the slave ship putting to sea. More than once David wondered whether he was to witness the payment that Van Dyer was to make for the goods he had received and for his passage to safety. Since nothing was said of it, he thought that the transaction had been carried out at some moment when he was not by. He realized later that Andrew Bardwell, from sheer distaste, had put off the matter until it could be postponed no longer.

They came, late one clear, hot evening, to the estuary of the great stream they had been seeking. As they dropped anchor outside the bar, every one on board breathed a sigh of relief to think that soon they were to be rid of the undesired presence of the Dutch captain. From Andrew Bardwell down to Nat Christy, there was not one person who failed to resent his presence among them, and who did not wish him away.

On a summons from Master Babcock, David went down to the cabin and found that he had been

mistaken, and that payment for the goods transferred to the *Yellow Tulip* was yet to be made. Andrew Bardwell was in his accustomed place at the head of the table. James Babcock beckoned David to sit beside him, where some papers were laid out, opposite the seat occupied by the stolid Jacob. David began to realize that the affair was a less ordinary one than he had realized.

"We understand," began Master Babcock, somewhat nervously, "that our chance passenger, Captain Van Dyer, has brought away from his ship certain valuables, a part of which he purposes to use in paying his debt to us. I have had a glimpse of this — this property of his, but I have preferred that an examination of what he has should be made in the presence of all three of us. Good Jacob, will you open your box?"

Jacob grunted an assent, lifted from his lap beneath the table a heavy iron box, and with elaborate, fumbling care, turned the key and lifted the lid. David gasped. If he had wondered at the Portuguese captain's handful of small diamonds, what could he feel now as he saw the cascade of shining jewels that Van Dyer poured out upon the board. Here were diamonds also, scores of them, some small, some large, all winking and flashing in the light from the swinging lamp. Here were unset

emeralds as green as the cool hollows of the curving waves, and here were rubies, glowing with a red flame that seemed to be alive. Last of all there was a string of pearls that, amid the blazing color of the other gems, looked like a ray of cold moonlight.

"Where — where did he get them?" The question burst from David unawares.

Jacob Van Dyer looked across at him, and evidently understood, although he spoke to James Babcock in Dutch.

"Tell the boy that while men of English blood make the best pirates, there are no smugglers in all the world like the Dutch."

Smuggling, robbery, murder, they must all have had to do with the gathering of that store. Sweating natives of India or Ceylon had probably washed out the diamonds and had been bullied by Van Dyer into selling them for a song. The rubies and emeralds must have come from some rajah's treasure house, stolen and sold, sold and stolen again and again, until they reached his great grasping hands. And the necklace of pearls! There could be scarcely any guessing what deeds of violence and blood had followed its long history, or what menace it might hold for its owners of the future.

"Did you think I could not pay?" said Jacob complacently to Andrew Bardwell.

"I had no doubt of it. But what — what are we to do with these?"

"They must be turned into money," the Dutch captain asserted, "and that you must do for me. What use would I make of them on the coast of Africa? The friend to whom I am going would put a knife through me on the first night, did he know I had such treasure. If you set me down there, you must, if you would have your pay, carry the jewels to some proper merchant, take your share of the gold paid down, and leave the rest with him. There is old Benoni, the Jew of Tangier, famous for his dealings in the gems of the East. You are to go to him. I can trust him to keep my share safe for me until I choose to claim it."

"But why should we have to do with the dirty work of disposing of your stolen and smuggled jewels?" exclaimed Andrew Bardwell.

Jacob Van Dyer accomplished a heavy maneuver that in a more agile man might have been recognized as a shrug of the shoulders.

"You say you must haf your pay," he declared, speaking English, perhaps in an effort at gigantic mockery. But he added in Dutch —"You will not take my good opium, then you must have my diamonds. You are honest men, I trust you!"

"The fellow is right," admitted James Babcock. "We must take one or the other, or let him have our goods as a gift."

"That I have vowed I would not do," Andrew Bardwell declared. "Although he hides it from us, it hurts him cruelly to be made to pay for the saving of his crew. It is our only way of making him suffer. And we know too little of the value of these gems to pay ourselves honestly out of them, without turning them into gold."

"The fat vermin has got us fairly into his toils," cried James Babcock, uncaring, apparently, whether or not Jacob understood this flattering discussion of his affairs. "Should we carry him to some Dutch or French or English port, and there set him ashore to dispose of his own evil wares, he can raise a hue and cry that we supported a mutinous crew and helped them to steal his ship from him. However much justice there is on our side, we will find that the *Anna Maria* is once more a marked vessel, and there will be the same difficulties to go through that we met in the West Indies."

"I do not in the least fear what he may say of us, or what harm he can bring," cried Andrew Bardwell. "What I will not endure one other hour is his foul presence upon my vessel. Take up his jewels, David, lay them in their box and put them

away. I would rather deal with his gems of ill omen than with himself."

David, looking up, saw his captain's square, honest face all ablaze with wrath. He had never seen it so before. He looked back wonderingly at Jacob Van Dyer. Even the unmoved Dutchman seemed to realize that such anger was an unwonted thing and to feel vaguely uneasy under it.

"When am I to go ashore?" he asked.

"Now," thundered Andrew Bardwell.

"Now?" echoed the other. "It is dark! It is night!"

"Now!" repeated Captain Bardwell. "David, tell Mr. Willets to swing out the boat that brought Captain Van Dyer from the *Yellow Tulip*. Have him get it into the water as quickly as he can."

"That little boat?" cried Jacob in horror. "And who goes with me?"

"You go alone." Andrew Bardwell rose from the table, strode out of the door, and mounted upon deck without another word.

It was only through power of respect for their captain that the crew of the *Anna Maria* were able to restrain outward show of curiosity when Jacob Van Dyer went over the side. A fresh wind was blowing inshore; and a high, tropical moon dropped flecks of dancing light on the crests of the little,

running waves. The low line of the coast, at least three miles away, looked infinitely distant in the still light. Hesitating beside the rail, Jacob made one last protest.

"Could you not take your ship closer in?" he asked Willets, who had overseen the launching of the boat. Andrew Bardwell stood afar in the stern and would have no further speech with his departing passenger.

"The captain says he will not risk his schooner by taking her inside the bar," returned Willets, whereat the stout Jacob sighed, looked once more at the distant shore, and went down into his boat without another word.

David stood watching him as the sound of the oarlocks died away, and the tiny craft dwindled to a black dot on the silver-sprinkled water. He was thinking how the sweat was pouring down that broad face, how blistered were those broad, cruel hands, as Jacob Van Dyer rowed away under the steady, unblinking stare of the round, white moon.

It seemed as though the *Anna Maria* had dropped a tremendous and hindering weight from her lading, when she was at last free of the Dutch captain. She shook out her sails and took the northward course with the swing and vigor of new life.

She had parted now with very nearly all of her original cargo. Save for some last casks of rum, her northern merchandise had been replaced by the goods of the East; and it was time she sought a market for these before she ran longer risk of being despoiled by pirates.

They spoke few ships on the way north, and stopped to traffic with none of them. They took, in fact, a course closer to the green coast than that followed by the larger vessels; and so did not fall in with many. By good fortune, they saw none that showed signs of being pirate craft. Once they were passed by a swift, heavily armed frigate, which plainly had as little wish to deal with them, as they had for speech with it. Like the slaver they had seen before, it was black and forbidding; it rode lighter in the water than the other, however, as though not so heavily laden. It seemed to have come out of the mouth of that same slow river, and was speeding northward on some hard-driving errand of its own. So completely did it outsail them that it came in sight at early morning, had overhauled them by noon, and was out of sight again before evening had fallen.

They passed, at last, the northern shoulder of Africa and came into the blue waters that sweep toward the Strait of Gibraltar. Before they should

They dropped anchor in the tiny harbor of a small town on the Spanish coast. *Page 223.*

begin to dispose of their cargo, Andrew Bardwell must first seek the Jew, Benoni, in Tangier, and rid himself of the last relic of Jacob Van Dyer's evil presence on board. Yet he was not willing, so he told David and Master Babcock, to trust his ship in that nest of piracy which every one knew the African city to be.

"We must seek some other way," he said.

They dropped anchor in the tiny harbor of a small town on the Spanish coast where the white houses clung to the face of a precipitous green cliff. Almost directly above them were the thick walls of a fort, the black mouths of whose guns fairly gaped down upon the *Anna Maria's* deck.

"Here we will be safe," Andrew Bardwell said. "The people of this town, though they look like swarthy cutthroats, are very different from the pirate gentry of the opposite coast. I know both of old. And here we will find a fishing boat to put us across, that we may complete our errand with the Jew of Tangier."

That very evening he went ashore to seek out a boatman, and came back saying that he had found a stout fisher fellow who would carry them safely over.

"He says that if we set out at sundown, he can bring us into Tangier by morning," he said to James

Babcock. "It seems that we will be safer from molestation if we make the voyage at night. It should not take us many hours to seek out the jewel merchant and do business with him; so that we should be back again soon after the following midnight. It is my plan that Churchill and Darrow go with us."

David was in the cabin when the captain gave this information to Master Babcock; and he stood waiting to see if Andrew Bardwell would say more. Since no further words followed, he burst out in desperate protest.

"Master Bardwell, you do not mean that you would leave me behind?"

He turned hot to the ears as he spoke, knowing that it was not his place to comment on the plans of his captain; but for the life of him he could not have kept silent. Hugh Darrow came in at that moment, having been summoned from above. Captain Bardwell gave some direction concerning the priming of the pistols, which must be looked to before the party should set out. He did not answer David at once; but evidently seemed to be thinking the matter over. It was plain that he had more than half a mind to leave the boy in safety on board the *Anna Maria.*

Master Babcock, seeing his mute distress, spoke

up quickly with a decision for which David was forever grateful to him.

"Let the boy go, Andrew; I shall need my clerk in this affair. And five is not too great a number of men to venture, with treasure in their pockets, into that robbers' roost. Ah, how little I thank Jacob Van Dyer for sending us all on such an errand."

Andrew Bardwell spoke suddenly.

"Is it Jacob Van Dyer alone, whom we are to thank for this coil we are in? Did Adam Applegate have naught to do with bringing us to this pass?"

"Adam Applegate?" repeated Master Babcock.

"Aye, and there is also another rascal who had an indirect hand in our misfortunes, even Jethro Slee."

If Andrew Bardwell would have answered, his words were drowned in the noise of Hugh Darrow's dropping the pair of heavy pistols he was examining, which fell to the floor with a crash.

"Have a care, Darrow," said Master Babcock. "We are a valuable company here, destined to save our country or hang gloriously as traitors to the King. Would you destroy us, before our time, by blowing us up with gunpowder?"

"I cannot think how I came to be so clumsy," answered Hugh, in flushing apology.

Nor could David understand the mischance either;

for ordinarily Hugh was the deftest and least awkward of any man he knew.

Captain Bardwell's misgivings seemed set at rest by Master Babcock's confidence. Accordingly, near sundown of the next day, the party of five was rowed ashore. They were all well armed and dressed in the roughest clothes that they possessed. The fisherman, a fellow whose dark skin was made darker by sunburn, who spoke little but smiled much, was ready and awaiting them. His heavy, but evidently seaworthy boat had been duly watered and provisioned for the voyage. It was just as the sun dropped behind the green cliff that their swarthy pilot spread his great rust-colored sail and headed his craft for the open sea.

CHAPTER XI

THE MEN OF BARBARY

It was midmorning of a bright, cloudless day when they came into the harbor of Tangier. To David's unaccustomed eyes this lesser seaport of Northern Africa was a strangely impressive place. It reminded him a little of the harbor of Kingston; for there were the same forest of shipping, the same blue lapping waters, and the same rustle of dry-leaved palms. There was, also, the same myriad of languages spoken in loud, confusing chatter all up and down the shores. But the white and gray Moorish buildings, with their domes and minarets, were very different from anything he had seen in the West Indies; and there was nowhere a language spoken which he could in the least understand. The ships, too, were many of them different from any that he had known before; since there were vessels from Greece and Constantinople, and strange craft with bows like the necks of swans, which might have been the very ships of Tyre and Sidon. Doubtless half of the vessels were pirate craft; but which half they were, David could not divine.

The fishing boat came to rest beside one of the less crowded wharves, where their Spaniard promised to await them until their mission in the city should be safely ended. Andrew Bardwell seemed to find his way, with no difficulty, through the crooked, thronging streets; although, after the first half-dozen turns, David was so completely bewildered that he could never have found the waterside again without a guide. Everywhere about them were black faces and clamorous tongues; while many passers-by stopped to stare curiously at this company of foreigners. A seaman's dark coat sat so strangely upon Master Babcock and went so ill with his distinguished mien, that it was impossible for him to pass unnoticed even in the densest crowd. All of them were sunburned from the long voyage; but even their brown faces looked strangely fair amongst the black ones all about them. They passed rows and rows of tiny ships and bazaars no larger than dog kennels, so they seemed to David, and not nearly so clean.

They arrived at last at one shop that seemed, if anything, smaller and meaner than any that they had passed. On coming in, they were greeted by a lean Arab servant, clad in abundant white, to whom Andrew Bardwell addressed some words in Lingua Franca. David heard him mention the name Benoni,

at which the servant bowed and shuffled away into an inner room. They waited for some time, Master Babcock uneasy and impatient, Anthony Churchill and David frankly curious; while Hugh Darrow stood whistling softly to himself, as indifferent as though the tiny crowded shop and the sunny, busy street outside were places as familiar as the village green at home.

When the servant returned, Andrew Bardwell, James Babcock and David were ushered through a low, arched doorway at the back of the shop. Anthony Churchill and Hugh Darrow were left behind, since it seemed that the Jew, Benoni, did not care to have too many witnesses to the transaction that was about to begin. David had expected another room like the shabby, overcrowded space they had just left, and was astonished to be brought into an airy apartment with arched doors and windows, with rich cushions and hangings, and with a glimpse of garden that looked like a green fairyland. His eyes had time to travel about the whole place before the person whom they sought came in at the opposite door.

"Upon my life," David heard James Babcock exclaim in an undertone, "the man must have known Moses."

It was true that Benoni was unbelievably old.

His beard and a few locks of hair that strayed from under his black cap were yellow-white with age, and his skin was like ancient parchment, cracked and wrinkled and puckered in a million different lines. But his small, black eyes glittered with the eagerness of youth; and his voice was full and strong. His hearing, also, seemed undamaged by his length of years; for he glanced quickly at Master Babcock as though he had heard, and perhaps even understood, his muttered exclamation. He professed, however, to have no knowledge of English; so that his transaction with Andrew Bardwell went forward in a rolling tongue that David knew to be Spanish, although he could not understand it.

There was a long period of talk, evidently of unimportant matters, before Andrew Bardwell could come to the real business in hand. James Babcock sat listening with extreme attention, and seemed to have no time to translate to David. His knowledge of Spanish was less than of Dutch; so that here he must sit quiet and strain his wits to understand what was passing between the other two. The boy therefore had nothing to do but watch the three intent faces and try to imagine what each one of the three men was thinking and saying.

He saw at last that Andrew Bardwell was bringing out the metal jewel box; and he saw the Jew's

strange, black eyes take on a new glitter, as though there were some extra sense within him that responded to the shining of those brilliant gems that were still hidden beneath the cover. Andrew Bardwell placed before him a dark, silken cushion, and poured out upon it the many-colored stream of glittering light. The sunshine from the arched window fell across the divan where the old Jew sat, and touched the rubies and emeralds, the sparkling white and yellow diamonds, and lit them with a brilliance that was almost unearthly. Whatever Benoni felt, he said no word, nor suffered his wrinkled face to move a muscle; he merely sat staring at the heap of treasure on the cushion between his knees, and for long minutes made no comment.

Then began the endless process of bargaining. It seemed to David much like one of the lengthy, silent games of chess which, when he was a small boy, he had watched his father and Master Camberwell play together. Benoni would take up one jewel and lay it down with an offer for its purchase; Andrew Bardwell would utter a short word of refusal and take up the gem in his turn. There would follow a long pause, until the Jew would offer again. Once more Andrew Bardwell would shake his head; and so the game would go on. James Babcock had now the opportunity to tell David what Benoni was say-

ing, between those long intervals of silence. The jewel merchant fell presently to making offers for the whole collection of stones, large and small together; but this, also, seemed a protracted and unsatisfactory affair. It seemed, so Master Babcock told David, that his first suggested price was one fourth of the amount that Jacob Van Dyer had said the treasure should bring. Slowly, very slowly, the price was moved forward to half their value, and then slowly crept upward.

More than two hours must have passed as the two sat opposite each other, playing this strange game with the yellow diamonds for pawns, the unset rubies and emeralds for knights and bishops, and the marvelous, pearl necklace for the king and queen. Finally the Jew made the closing move; he offered the price which Jacob Van Dyer had mentioned as the proper value and Andrew Bardwell, falling back into English, ejaculated, "Done!"

They all leaned back in their seats, each one of the company evidently weary, Andrew Bardwell and Benoni from the long struggle of wits, James Babcock and David from the tenseness with which they had watched the encounter. The shuffling servant brought in refreshments; and over the tiny cups of too-sweet coffee, Captain Bardwell and the dealer in jewels fell into new talk. David could hear the

name of Jacob Van Dyer spoken first by one and then by the other. In a moment, James Babcock translated to David what had been said. The Dutch captain was dead, the tidings of his end having been carried by that swift frigate which had passed them on the northward journey. He and that friend with whom he had taken refuge had, so Benoni said, "fallen into a little quarrel over the price of opium."

"So," said James Babcock, "and that is the last of the most evil man that it has ever been my lot to see! And now what of those jewels which were still partly his; are we to leave them in the hands of Benoni, as Van Dyer first directed us?"

There followed a long consultation between Andrew Bardwell and the Jew. It seemed that Benoni had acted as Van Dyer's banker before, had held various sums for him, and knew more of his affairs, perhaps, than did any other man. That Jacob should have family or friends seemed most unlikely; but the Jew professed himself willing to find out his heirs and to do whatever was possible toward paying them that which the grasping and over-cunning Van Dyer had been forced to leave behind. Then, after this colloquy was at an end, came the long process of weighing out the gold which was to pay for that share of the gems due the owners of the *Anna Maria*.

David was called upon to set down the amounts as Andrew Bardwell translated them to him. A black-faced, white-clad clerk of Benoni's was brought in to keep the Jew's record of the complicated transaction, in which coins of every shape, value and mintage were told out to make up the amount. David glanced over at the record of his fellow clerk and saw the strangely scrawled characters upon the page, which looked to him like letters seen in a looking-glass. The other grinned and nodded, and evidently thought David's square American writing was far more curious than his own could be.

Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock divided the gold, each man pocketing half of it. Refusing Benoni's earnest offers of further hospitality, they came forth with David into the outer shop, where Anthony Churchill and Hugh Darrow must have had a long and weary wait of it. It was the quiet hour of the hot, early afternoon. The once thronged streets were now nearly empty, as the five made their way down the steep, crooked lanes to the waterside. They stopped once at a low-browed shop to rouse the drowsy proprietor into selling them food for a midday meal, and for supplies of the homeward voyage. Fantastic dishes they were that the five hungry men consumed; to David they

seemed to come out of the "Arabian Nights", and were more interesting than appetizing.

When they reached the quay where they had left their boat, the whole wharf was silent and deserted under the white African sunshine. They walked from end to end of the series of landing places; they looked everywhere among the raking masts and strangely curved vessels of every sort. Nowhere could they see the square fishing boat with the rust-colored sail, nowhere could they find trace of the man who had brought them.

After long search, they were told by a sleepy boatman that he had seen their craft put out to sea just before the hour of noon. He thought, he said, that the Spaniard had left a message for them in the drinking shop at the head of the quay. Here they did, indeed, find news of their departed vessel. A voluble Arab told them, with much gesticulation, of how the man had decided that he could wait no longer, and had set off in great haste for the opposite coast. It was no matter, the man assured them, for he could find them a boat and other men, honest fellows, who were worth a dozen of the departed Spanish fisherman.

Andrew Bardwell knitted his brows and told the man that he could seek out his own boatmen.

"Not for a thousand pounds," said he to James

Babcock, "would I spend the night in this den of robbers."

"We might go back to the house of the Jew," suggested Anthony Churchill; but this both Captain Bardwell and Master Babcock agreed to be impossible.

"I do not know whether Benoni is a wise and just man, or the most desperate of rascals," said Master Babcock, "but of this I am sure — that it is the greatest load off my weary mind that our affair with him has come to an end. Jacob Van Dyer's fortunes may lie in his hands for good or for ill; that is no longer a concern of ours. We have our just due out of that sinful man's glittering plunder; and for no reward in the world would I go back to renew intercourse with that strange, ancient, crafty son of Israel."

Captain Bardwell finally made selection of a stout fishing boat, with a pointed, winglike sail, and with two dark Berber sailors to man her. "They may be the most bloodthirsty of pirates," he observed, "but they are only two, while we are well armed and are five. There is less risk in embarking than in staying longer here."

The shadows cast by the white sunshine were lengthening as at last they set forth across the smooth waters of the bay. The wind was fitful and

very light; but their craft was swift and was well handled. They had come more than three miles upon their way, when a second boat, larger than their own and with a wider spread of pointed sail, came winging across the smooth waters toward them.

"Put your helm hard over," Captain Babcock ordered his black boatman. "Give that craft wide searoom; I do not like the look of it." But the boatman merely grinned, pretended he did not understand, and held upon his way. The second vessel came closer and closer; until David could see that she had six men aboard her and that they, without concealment, were bringing forth knives and pistols and curved Arab swords. With a crash, the attacking vessel rammed the side of the little boat, tilting her dangerously, while Andrew Bardwell drew out his pistol and fired in the face of the first man who was in the act of springing on board.

Whether their own boatmen had been in league with the others from the first, or whether they saw that the battle was going against their employers, and so joined forces with the pirates, was not to be known. It was plain enough that the five had eight armed men against them and that, taken by surprise as they were, there was little chance that they should not be overpowered.

David fired his pistol and then, not having time to draw his cutlass, struck out with the butt of his weapon against the man who had sprung upon him. Some one leaped upon him from behind and felled him with a desperate blow on the back of his head. He heard, at his elbow, a shout from Anthony Churchill and a groan from Captain Bardwell; and then he seemed to go forth into black space attended by a million spinning stars.

He came to himself as he lay upon a steep stretch of beach and was conscious first of how hot the sand was beneath him, from the long blazing of the afternoon sunshine. A cool ripple of water touched his hand; whereupon he heard James Babcock's voice say:

"Help me to move the lad, Churchill; the tide will reach him in a moment."

He opened his eyes as they lifted him, and strove to tell them that he had taken no harm. He saw Andrew Bardwell looking down upon him with a smile of great relief; but, as he sat up and looked about at the other faces, he saw that they were all drawn and anxious and that, moreover, there were only three of them.

"Where is Hugh Darrow?" were his first words; but Andrew Bardwell merely shook his head.

"We do not know," said Anthony. "There was

a mad confusion of attacking men; we were overwhelmed, stripped of our gold and our weapons, and dropped overboard upon this island, here beyond the mouth of the bay. Not one of us has seen Darrow since the first moment of attack."

David moved stiffly, assured Master Babcock, who still regarded him anxiously, that he was not greatly hurt, and began to look more thoroughly about him. James Babcock's coat was slashed open at the shoulder; but no very deep wound had been inflicted by the blow. He noticed that Captain Bardwell limped heavily as he got up from the strip of sand and moved toward a rock higher up the slope. And when he had the wits to notice more fully what sort of an island was this upon which they had been landed, he observed that the sand upon which he had been lying was damp in spite of its heat, and that the rocks, even those that stood highest, were all overgrown with wet and slimy weeds. Yet it was not for some minutes that he realized that the bit of land where they had been left was one which, in the course of a few hours, would be completely covered by the tide.

It was a silent company that sat together looking out at the far stretch of water and moving, without words, as the water slowly rose. Now the sand was quite covered; now the lowest rocks were drowned;

now they had taken refuge on the highest point and the rippling tide was already within a few yards of their feet. The afternoon had come to its end, and, to the westward, the sun was going down in flaming splendor.

Suddenly in the midst of the silence, David gave a whole-hearted chuckle.

"What ails you, lad?" asked James Babcock. "Has the strangeness of our situation robbed you of your wits?"

"No," answered David slowly, "I was only thinking of that day in the coach, when I was setting out with Aunt Candace's jam pots and Mistress Mehitable's best bonnet, and you said that I was running away to be married."

He had been thinking that the journey which had begun so incongruously, with the flowered bandbox and the jolting coach, was now come to a strange end. For, as it must surely seem, the adventures of that company could go no further and the next step must be death. When he thought of that day of setting forth and how different was the beginning from the end, for the life of him he could not repress a laugh.

"David," said Andrew Bardwell, "you do my heart good!"

There was another long pause. The water was

now close to their feet. David could see Andrew Bardwell's rugged face outlined against the sky above him. His expression had not changed; nor did the danger that they were in seem to have broken his steady calm. They were all so still that the lightest ripple of the water could be heard, as it whispered along the rocks and came, steady and unhurrying, upward and upward. Then James Babcock spoke out of the silence.

"There is a name in the hearts of all of us," he said, "although none of the rest of you will speak it,— you, Andrew Bardwell, the least of all. That name is Adam Applegate's. Had we not followed the counsel of that man, we would never have taken the course toward Africa, we would not have fallen in with that cruel and crafty coward, Jacob Van Dyer, we would never have been so entangled in his dishonest affairs as to come to this last and desperate pass. And I have not forgotten that you distrusted him from the first and that it was against your will, rather than with it, that we followed his way."

"It is of no use to speak of that matter now," answered Andrew Bardwell, "nor any need of saying that the blame for our misfortunes lies with one man or another. If I mistrusted the counsel of Adam Applegate, as indeed I did, it was my right

and my duty, as master of the ship, to refuse to follow the will of the rest of you. No; I, too, felt that of many difficult ways the one we took was perhaps the best of them. I think it was honest David who had the most misgivings and who said the least."

"It is very true," declared James Babcock, "that we have passed the need of discussing where the blame lies." And there was silence again.

Of the two boats which had been the means of their undoing, the larger one had sailed away; but the other was still standing on and off the island, flitting back and forth in the fading light, manned by four black figures.

"The fellows are anxious to see whether we make a good end," observed Master James Babcock. "They are doomed to disappointment, I fear; they do not yet know in how calm a manner the men of New England do all things."

He moved again, for the water had touched his foot.

As David watched the small craft, dark as though outlined in black ink against the ruddy sky, he was aware of a strange turmoil that had arisen on board. The sound of a pistol shot came to them across the water, followed by another. The boat seemed to have no one at her helm and came drifting toward

them, carried here and there by the fitful breeze, while those upon her seemed to think of nothing but the furious struggle which had now begun. As the little vessel came directly between him and the last streak of crimson in the sky, he could see that one man with his back against the mast was fighting a desperate battle against the others. He seemed to have four adversaries, then three, at last but two. Then the boat drifted away from the single flaming bit of sunset and he could distinguish nothing. He watched breathless, and presently he saw her gather headway, sweep about in a long curve, and come straight for the island. Her course was not easy, for what little wind there was blew from behind them; so that he watched the light craft go veering and skimming in one tack after another, until she came close. A low hail sounded across the intervening space.

"Captain Bardwell; David," it called; "do you still live?"

It was the voice of Hugh Darrow.

CHAPTER XII

A FLIGHT OF BATS

The marooned company was standing on the ridge of rock, knee-deep in water, when Hugh finally succeeded in bringing the boat alongside. They scrambled on board, David accomplishing the move with some difficulty, owing to his still-ringing head. Even in spite of this, and although the tropical dark had now fallen, he realized in a moment that something was wrong with Hugh Darrow. His friend lay along the rail, holding to the helm with one hand; but he scarcely moved or spoke as they climbed into the boat. As David came close to him, his foot touched something wet and slippery; and, when he stooped down to feel of it, he found that it was warm.

"Is it blood?" he asked.

"Yes," returned Hugh, scarcely above a whisper. "Mine."

Anthony Churchill took the helm; and the others lifted Hugh to where he could lie more comfortably in the bottom of the boat. With strips of linen torn from their shirts, James Babcock made shift

to bind up the gaping wound in his side. Despite all he could do, the blood still welled through the bandages and dripped steadily upon the rough planks. It was very dark now; and the little breeze which had brought Hugh to them had failed completely. The boat rocked idly on slow ripples and drifted more and more inshore with the rising tide.

"Unless the breeze mends," Anthony Churchill said to Captain Bardwell in an undertone, "daylight will find us still drifting helpless before this pirate town. Since we have neither oars nor wind to aid us, we will yet fall into the hands of those murderers and robbers as soon as the sun comes up."

Andrew Bardwell did not reply, for Hugh Darrow had muttered his name and, with a feeble motion of his hand, seemed to indicate that he wished him to come close.

"I have something I must tell you," he said. "Master Babcock has done his best; but he cannot undo the harm that stabbing knife has accomplished. When I saw David struck down, with Captain Bardwell being held by three men and stripped of his gold, and Master Babcock already flung upon the island, I knew that our one hope was in keeping possession of the boat." He spoke very slowly, with long pauses of weariness between the words. He managed to tell them how he had rolled under

a spare sail and had remained there so quietly that the pirates had not suspected his presence. When the second boat had sailed away and the men on his own craft had settled down, with two of them, so far as he could judge, fallen asleep, he knew that the moment had come to save the others, if saved they were to be. The account of his struggle seemed, however, not to be the matter of which he wished so greatly to speak. When he had come to the end of his tale, he waited long, evidently gathering his strength for a new effort.

"Do you remember," he began finally, "that day when we set forth, and the *Dryad* came to seek us out, at Benton harbor? We wondered how she had got wind of our sailing and of our purpose, and I heard Master Babcock say, 'Some one has whispered our secret to a friend, or babbled it in a tavern.' And later, after we had put to sea with the brig in pursuit, I heard Master Babcock say again that he wondered whether the traitor was on board our ship or the King's. The traitor was indeed on board the *Anna Maria,* for it was I."

He was still and nobody spoke. David felt like crying out in contradiction. It could not be that Hugh Darrow, the bravest and most faithful of the company, had betrayed them. After some minutes he began to speak slowly again.

"It was only by chance that I knew of the fact that we were to stop at Half-Moon Island. When I came to confer with Captain Bardwell concerning my part in the venture, Master Babcock was in the room with him and I heard them speak the name of the island; and Captain Bardwell declared that it was the best harbor he could think of for refitting. We all of us knew the purpose of the voyage; but I think only the three of us knew of the plan to land at Half-Moon Island — the three of us and Jethro Slee."

"Do not try to tell us, lad," said Andrew Bardwell. "It matters not, now, how our secret came to be abroad. And whatever you may say, I shall never doubt your loyalty."

"But you must hear." Hugh's voice seemed to grow stronger with the earnestness of his effort, although the pauses between the words grew longer and longer. "I spoke carelessly to a friend, a comrade whom I had always trusted; I told him that I was to sail upon an expedition that had high purposes for the freedom of our country. And I said, also, that the voyage was to be broken, as I had guessed, at Half-Moon Island. It was the veriest idle speech, which he or I should have forgotten in a week. But that same evening, I passed a tavern on the waterside, and just within the window I saw

my friend sitting with Jethro Slee. That man of ill omen was plying my comrade with drink and was listening with an evil, intent face to his drunken chatter. At that time I did not know Jethro Slee, nor that he was so great an enemy of yours and David's. Afterward, when the brig had pursued us to the island, after I had seen Slee on board, and David had told me somewhat of what he was, then I knew what I had done. I think it was in the hope that I might mend the evil I had wrought, that I was so glad to carry Adam Applegate's messages to you; for I believed that his counsel might bring us success after my unguarded tongue had threatened us with failure. And this is what Adam Applegate's advice has brought us. Did ever man do more harm where he would have done good?"

With the last words Hugh's voice died away completely. David heard James Babcock attempt to speak, heard him choke and saw him turn away. But Andrew Bardwell, kneeling beside the wounded man, answered steadily and with his usual voice.

"I have told you," he said, "that it matters not. Where you have made a mistake, so have all of us. We followed the counsel of an evil man, we have done naught that was directly wrong, yet we have fallen upon evil days. Adam Applegate thought that he spoke wisely and justly; we believed we were

doing what was best when we followed his way. And though we stand now in desperate case, the end has not yet come. We will, God helping us, still go forward; we will yet serve our country and the cause of freedom. And when we have brought this long voyage to a safe and glorious end, the credit will be no more ours than it will be Hugh Darrow's."

He ceased speaking; but Hugh did not reply. All the strength that was within him he had used to make plain the wrong that he had done. But at Andrew Bardwell's words he smiled, turned his head a little and smiled also at David who sat at his other side. After a long, long time he was able to whisper:

"David, the world has never been quite the same since I first saw your guileless, honest smile."

He closed his eyes once more. It must have been the space of an hour, perhaps two, that passed in absolute silence upon the little boat. Hugh breathed heavily, then at last more lightly, and finally not at all. So came the end to a brave man, who, through all of his misdirected life, had striven to do his best. In the dark, David could make out James Babcock, his face set, looking steadily out to sea, and Andrew Bardwell, with his head bowed and with his eyes never leaving Hugh's white face. Death had

come and had been present with them for perhaps half an hour when Anthony Churchill started and spoke.

"I felt a breath of wind touch my cheek," he said.

The light flaw died away, but was presently followed by another, which filled the sail for a moment and gave them sufficient steerageway to swing their bow away from shore. They had drifted close in, but, so far, no craft had passed near them; nor had they been seen from land. Now at last the breeze began to blow steadily; the boat heeled over, and they were able to set a steady course away from the shores of Africa.

A late moon rose to light them, a crooked misshapen thing, which threatened their safety as much as it offered help. One or two boats passed them; but no one hailed or offered to stop them on their way. The wind freshened and they sailed on hour after hour, making far better time on the homeward voyage than they had when they had crossed with the Spanish fisherman.

As the stars and the moon faded in the paling sky, and the water whitened in the light of the coming morning, they became aware of a scattered fleet of dark-colored, flitting boats with wide-winged sails coming toward them. Strange sounds, also,

began to be heard: singing, and shouting from boat to boat. As a rule the Barbary feluccas were a silent craft, moving lightly over the water without sound. But the mad, roistering crew which the small fleet carried seemed to think that the whole seaway was their very own; they veered and jibed; they hailed one another with loud drunken calls; and, fortunately, they seemed to pay no heed to the small boat approaching, which swung away and gave them a wide berth.

Dawn was showing in a red-orange line where once the coast of Africa had stretched along the horizon when they came in sight of the high cliffs of Spain. It was, so David thought, a happy moment of home-coming to see the *Anna Maria* at anchor below the white walls of the fort. As they came near, however, there seemed strangely little stir of life along her decks. Anthony hailed as they drew alongside; and a single face, that of Ben Turner's, appeared above the rail.

"Is it you, Captain Bardwell? Thank God, you are come back safe. We have lost two men; and Mr. Willets is very bad. We have had desperate work here."

As they came over the side, one look at the littered deck showed them that he had spoken the very truth. Broken casks, smashed chests, slashed and torn bales

of silk had been scattered everywhere. David sat down weakly upon a coil of rope. His head felt strange; and it seemed that this last catastrophe was more than he could understand. Yet, presently, he contrived to steady himself and go down into the cabin with Master Babcock to give aid to the first mate, who was indeed sorely wounded. After long examination, Master Babcock, however, said cheerily:

"The hurt is not like Hugh Darrow's. This man will live."

It was some hours later that Willets recovered enough to tell them the story of what had happened in their absence. Some time after midnight, he said, the Spanish fisherman came alongside and asked to speak with him. The man declared that he had waited long at the quay in Tangier and that, finally, a messenger had come, saying that Captain Bardwell sent word he would be so long detained that the fishing boat was to go home without him. The Spaniard had perhaps not understood perfectly, and had had some honest doubts; but the black-faced ruffian had threatened him and had bidden him be gone if he valued his life. So the fellow had put to sea; but his misgivings had grown greater and greater as the miles had passed; and, while he had not had the courage to go back, he had at least been

wise enough to come to the *Anna Maria* and report what had happened.

"I sent him ashore, forthwith," continued George Willets, "and told him to find those of the crew who were in the town on leave. With you and your companions gone, we were not many on board at best; but we seemed so safe, lying under the very guns of the Spanish fort, that I had allowed several of the men a twenty-four-hour leave on shore. So we had but a bare handful left. It was my intention to put the *Anna Maria* to sea and to seek you out, no matter what nest of pirates we fell into."

After some time, his tale went on, he had heard a boat and had felt sure that his crew was at last returning. But no! A crowd of feluccas, "like a flock of black bats", came swooping out of the dark, all in a moment, and their crews came swarming on board. He and his few seamen were helpless before the attack. Most of the men were thrown bodily down into the forecastle and the hatch battened down upon them. He and Tom Brooks, lying bleeding in the scuppers, were the only ones above decks. The pirates had flocked down into the hold and in mad haste had brought up such of the goods of the *Anna Maria's* cargo as their small vessels could bear away.

"What they thought they could not carry, they fell to destroying; but that task was interrupted by one enterprising fellow's coming upon the rum. At that, they gave over all else that they had been doing. They swung up cask after cask, broached them there on deck, and in a very brief space, every man of them was roaring drunk. They seemed to care for little else than that each should get his due share; they quarreled and shouted and rolled upon the decks; then picked themselves up to drink again. At last, by the gray in the sky, their leader, who was not quite so befuddled of wits as the others, saw that they had better be returning to their boats. They seemed to know that the fort was above us, and that our men would be coming back; for they went tumbling over the rail, shook out their batlike sails, and were away into the dark, leaving what you see behind them."

Andrew Bardwell sat thinking long, when he had heard the whole of Willets' story.

"Well," he said at last, "it is a bad business; but we must even make the best of it. Churchill, will you see how many of the seamen are able to set to the work of clearing the decks?"

Two days passed before the *Anna Maria* was once more able to put to sea. David gave what assistance he could; but there were strange sensa-

tions in his wounded head, which seemed always to prevent his doing what he set out to do, and made him clumsy, slow and awkward. Most of the sailors, however, were able to turn a hand to set the ship in order; so that at last the schooner was in sailing trim once more.

They had left Hugh Darrow in the little burying ground, on a ledge high up on the face of the hill, where an avalanche of spring-blossoming vines poured over the gray wall, and where, at the foot of the cliff, the breaking waves would sing forever to those sleeping ears. Hugh, and those two seamen who had lost their lives in the last struggle with the pirates, lay there side by side. They had neither homes nor kindred, so far as any one knew, and would be mourned only by those comrades with whom they had sailed the stormy seas.

As the *Anna Maria* moved out from her anchorage, Ben Turner and David stood together, looking up at the green hillside which was Hugh Darrow's resting place.

"A seafaring man might travel far and not find so fair a haven for his last port," said Turner.

But David, who was thinking of that vivid friendship which had now come to an end, could give no cheerful answer. He turned to lend a hand with the trimming of the sails as the *Anna Maria* came

through the mouth of the harbor and laid her course westward. But he found himself so heavy and weary that he gave the rope into Ben Turner's hand.

"There is nothing wrong with me," he kept saying to himself. "There can be nothing wrong."

He had told himself this same thing many times in the course of the last two days.

It was the end of his watch; so that he was free to stumble down the companionway into the cabin. Captain Bardwell and Master Babcock were below and were discussing their future plans.

"The Moorish pirates carried away a good third of our cargo, and succeeded in destroying very near to another third of it," Andrew Bardwell was saying. "With what is left, I propose to seek out the Baltic ports, where I have more knowledge of the trade than in the Mediterranean. There I have also good friends who will put me in the way of procuring another cargo. We must admit that our expedition, as far as its first purpose is concerned, has not prospered. But we are still whole; and our hearts are stout; and there is nothing to hinder us from launching a new voyage and hoping for better things. We will yet serve the freedom of our country."

"I wish I could understand," replied James Babcock, "who was really at the bottom of our mis-

fortunes. Who sent our fisherman back from Tangier; who gave word to those black rascals that our ship was richly laden and worth the risk of plundering? Was it gossip along the quays that made those men of Barbary set forth upon their own account? Or was it the Jew, Benoni, who felt that he had paid too much and set out to recover his gold in his own pleasant way? Or did some message come from Jacob Van Dyer by means of that swift, black ship that passed us on the northward voyage? It is beyond the power of my poor wits to solve the mystery. And perhaps David would say that it was Adam Applegate's black devils again who had fallen upon us by mistaken orders from their master. A vastly awkward wizard I take Adam Applegate to be. What think you, David?"

David had sat down with them and had been listening dully. They had looked strange and unreal to him as he came in; now, as his head seemed to whirl faster and faster, they began to appear terrible and misshapen. He strove to answer, but found that no words came. It seemed that without any special will of his own he spread his arm across the table and laid his head upon it.

"What ails you, lad?" asked Andrew Bardwell.

David did not reply. He was vaguely conscious that the two men lifted him between them and

carried him to his bunk, that Andrew Bardwell was taking off his coat, and that James Babcock was examining the wound at the back of his head. Then he lay back and allowed himself to drift off into the tortured darkness of nightmare.

For days thereafter he was far too ill to know anything that went on about him. The blow that had struck him down had made a long cut in the back of his head, a wound that had seemed at the time of no great moment, in comparison with the hurts that the others had received. But infection had set in; and now a consuming fever was running through the boy's veins. He was, part of the time, wholly unconscious, part of the time delirious and raving of stolen jewels, of starved and drowned sailors, of men who were destroying Hugh Darrow before his eyes while he had no power to save him. Now and then he knew vaguely that the *Anna Maria* was making a stormy voyage of it, that his fevered body was being thrown about helplessly in a bunk, and was being unmercifully bruised; but he did not care. The total indifference of desperate illness had taken possession of him; and there seemed to be nothing on earth that mattered in the least. The delirium slowly died away; but he still lay limp and unmoving and still had no care for anything that might come.

He heard James Babcock say to Andrew Bardwell, "He ought to have air and sunshine and good food, none of which are possible on this tossing vessel." And since he must have thought David still unconscious, he added, "Without them there is no chance that he can live."

David heard and understood; but life and death had, for him, dwindled into matters of little moment.

He was still supremely indifferent when, one day, they wrapped him in blankets and took him on deck. The *Anna Maria* was jerking restlessly, anchored as she was in a choppy seaway. David saw Ben Turner's troubled face and Anthony Churchill's; yet it was beyond his power to give any sign of recognition or even to wish to do so. When they lowered him over the side into a boat, he felt no curiosity as to what they were doing; and long before they had reached shore he had drifted once more into unconsciousness.

He opened his eyes at last with a feeling that he had been very long and very far away from the world. He wondered vaguely at the whitewashed walls of the tiny room in which he lay; he could not understand at all the shaft of yellow sunshine that touched his blue-and-white counterpane. And presently a black-haired woman, with a wide, kind face,

came in and spoke to him, which puzzled and bewildered him more than ever. Even if she had talked to him in English, it is doubtful whether he would have understood; and since she spoke in French, there was no hope of his comprehending what kind words she was saying. He closed his eyes and dropped into something that was more like real sleep than anything he had known for a weary time.

It was only long after, and by means of calculations from other dates, that he had any idea of how many weeks he lay on that narrow, white bed and scarcely moved or spoke. But it was easier to eat the wholesome food which the good woman coaxed him to swallow than it had been to choke down the rude messes of ship's cooking that James Babcock had tried to force upon him. He slept and dreamed and waked to eat, and, with great effort, to smile now and then upon the peasant dame who had unaccountably become his nurse. Now and then her husband, a tall Breton farmer in corduroy trousers and blue blouse, with bright red socks and wooden shoes, came stumping into the room to ask, as David finally began to understand, how he was faring. He was not suffered to stay long; but was soon swept away by his efficient wife, who would smooth David's pillow, straighten his sheet, and bid him sleep again.

He came finally to a day when he could sit up; and then, no very great time later, he made a perilous journey across the room to a chair beside the window under the sloping roof. He looked out on a landscape of small, green fields, of tiny white-washed houses, and the silver thread of a river winding below a hill. A white road, bordered with tall, thin poplars, stretched away before him, and along it his host, looking very dusty and tired, was coming home from his day's labor in the fields. David was seized with a great desire to be out in that green-and-white and enticing world; and the thought must have put strength into his shaking knees, for it was not more than three days later that he himself walked for a few yards along that white road under the poplar trees.

It had been spring when James Babcock had brought him to the cottage and had put him under the care of good Madame Gobinot, leaving with her a store of money which David, when he heard of it, knew well had been spared with great difficulty. It was midsummer before he walked freely, with his old swing, along that highroad to Monsieur Gobinot's tiny farm and gave him help in his fields. As he grew stronger, he not only bent his back to the labor of helping his two good friends; but he bent his wits to the task of learning their language.

When he was able to talk with them with a certain ease, he learned how he had been carried ashore and how "the kind captain stood long stooping over his bed", so Madame Gobinet said, and "looked at him with hungry eyes, as though he had little hope of ever seeing him again." Then the American vessel had sailed away; but a promise had been left behind that she would surely come again to see whether the boy had fared well or ill.

"It was plain that it broke their hearts to leave you," said good Monsieur Gobinot, "but what chance was there for you on that weary, restless ship? And they bade me tell you, if you got well, that you were to have great patience and abide here until their return, no matter how long the time should be."

The summer passed and the autumn; then the rainy French winter set in early. The time did, indeed, seem endless to David; and it was months before he felt his true strength come back to him. Just before the winter began, he received a letter from James Babcock; a worn and weary missive it seemed to be, after its devious journey. It had been written in a Russian port; it had been dispatched southward from Copenhagen; and had wandered across Prussia and Holland; and had come at last into David's eager hands, more by a miracle,

it seemed, than by the ordinary methods of travel.

"Our days of adventure seem over," wrote Master Babcock, "and we are toiling at the matter-of-fact labor of earning our plain living. We have disposed of our remnant of a cargo to fairly good advantage, and have careened our ship and cleaned her bottom. Now a thrifty Swedish merchant has chartered our vessel for coastwise trade; and, although his bargain was an extraordinarily wise one for him, even we are gathering a little gold by it. We must forego this noble pursuit during the winter, when the ports are closed with ice; but we are striving to collect a cargo, little by little, and we ourselves will winter in some harbor which will not be closed as are these cold northern ones. Have courage and patience, David, lad; and when the spring comes we shall all be together again and shall be setting forth once more upon the high seas."

David's heart lifted to those last words. He knew that Master Babcock had written the letter, not knowing whether its destined recipient were alive or dead. He pictured the *Anna Maria* struggling on her last voyages in the stormy autumn weather, with her decks slippery with ice, and her sails and riggings iron-hard in the cutting wind. And it was all that she might earn a little more of the Swedish

merchant's money to go toward that great cause in which she had first set sail.

The winter seemed very long; so that David wondered often whether it would ever wear to an end. But spring comes earlier in Brittany than does the shy and reluctant season that waits so long in cold New England. By the end of February there were signs that the chilly weather could not last forever; and a brave lark, whom David heard singing one morning in the cold rain, put new heart into him. And on a chilly day, a week later, he saw a ship put in at the little harbor; and almost before it was half in view beyond the point, he knew by the great thrill that ran through his whole being that it was the *Anna Maria.* Presently, James Babcock came up the path from the beach, looking thinner and older but with the same unquenched smile. He was even wearing the plum-colored coat in which David had first seen him, but it was a worn and battered garment now, faded with sea water and decorated in more than one place by great square patches. But James Babcock, no matter what was his outward appearance, could never be other than the same brave, jesting gentleman.

"You look far better than do we, you great, lazy lad," he said. "It is high time that we took you to sea once more, and set you to hard labor."

But in spite of his gayety his voice shook. It was evident that the sight of David, hale and strong again, was almost too joyful a sight for that good friend who, through all these long months, had had no way of knowing whether he had lived or died.

Many were David's farewells to the good Gobinots; but burning was his eagerness to be at sea again. He felt that at no time in his life had he been so happy as when he was once more on the decks of the *Anna Maria,* greeting his friends and being overwhelmed with hearty welcoming. Andrew Bardwell said little; but his face showed what James Babcock's had, that he had thought long of his best friend's son and had not known whether he was to see him again. A weather-beaten craft was the *Anna Maria,* very different from that spotless vessel, the *Santa Maria,* which had set sail from Benton so many months before. But the schooner had a good cargo of Norwegian lumber, of Swedish iron, of Russian duck and hemp, which Andrew Bardwell, with unquenchable purpose, was planning to carry to the West Indies.

"They will have forgotten our evil reputation by now," he said. "Times change and memories are short in a seafaring life."

Almost the first thing that David noticed as he

came on board was that the swivel gun in the bow was not the same as the one with which Hugh Darrow had fought so manfully against the Carib Indians. This was a longer and a slimmer weapon and of a newer type than the somewhat clumsy affair which the *Anna Maria* had formerly carried. Andrew Bardwell noticed that his eye was resting upon it and said:

"The old one was torn loose in a gale and went overboard into the Baltic. And this one we purchased from John Becket." Then seeing David's face of mute questioning, he added, "We lay off the coast of Devon; and Master Babcock and I went ashore and sought out the iron-master. He is surely a strong friend to your father's memory and to American liberty."

"And did he — were the guns still there?" asked David.

Very slowly Andrew Bardwell shook his head.

"We were too late," he said gently.

They were standing together in the bow, as the schooner breasted the first seas that met her as she came out of the harbor. David leaned against the muzzle of the gun and saw almost under his hand the stamp of John Becket's workmanship, a star with the two square, broad letters, J. B. Andrew Bardwell stood looking forward, straight out to sea

as he gave the boy the account of what had happened.

"I had done the man an injustice. I had thought that he was more mindful of his own skin and of his purse than he was of serving Amos Dennison or the cause of freedom. But I was mistaken. He had contrived much and had risked more to delay, to put off the demands of those above him, and to wait, ever in hope of the coming of our vessel. He said often that the guns were not ready; he gave this excuse and that one. But no ship came from America and in the end he had to agree that the work was finished. This time they had paid him money down to bind the bargain; if he were to keep the guns from them, he would have had to return the gold and that he found himself unable to do. He had accomplished a long delay; for autumn had come and those in high places had decided, at last, that they would not ship so weighty and important a cargo in the stormy weather of winter time. But when spring came, there was no further excuse for waiting longer. A great vessel, so John Becket said, lay off the shore in the dark, and a swarm of men and boats came to put the guns on board. We were too late by but one little week."

"And were the guns to be carried to America?" David asked.

"He said that, from the talk of the seamen, he gathered that the ship was supposed to sail for the West Indies. The men said that they would lie in Plymouth harbor for some little time longer to take on more supplies and provisions for a voyage of some length. None of them were certain whither they were bound; but the gossip of the ship seemed to have it that the Windward Islands would be their destination. 'But,' said John Becket, 'there would have been no need to postpone a voyage to the West Indies on account of the winter weather. It is my belief that the windy ports of New England will see those guns come ashore.'

"'You think then,' I asked him, 'that the breaking point of the long quarrel is near?'

"'I am an Englishman and can give no information to possible rebels,' John Becket answered. 'Amos Dennison dropped his guns overboard; but I can only say that, should you have them under your hatches, you would better carry them home as swiftly as wind and sail can waft you. The idols of old tyrannies will some day fall, and that day is drawing very near. Men in king's palaces and in council rooms still say there will be no war; but it is those same men who are pressing hard upon honest John Becket and others of his kind to be ready with their guns. I know not the name of the ship

which carried them away; but she bore a far greater cargo than the burden of your schooner could have ever compassed. May Heaven decide the coming struggle rightly; there will be brave men battling on both sides.'"

James Babcock had come up to them as they stood together at the vessel's prow.

"Have you seen our purchase from John Becket, the one piece of ordnance left in his arsenal? We have fared far and gone through much adventure, and behold our prize — one single gun!"

"We may see more of those same wares of John Becket's before we are done," declared Andrew Bardwell stoutly. "It is our purpose to carry our cargo from the Baltic to be sold in Jamaica and we will find out, from that whispering gossip that we know can run so swiftly through the Islands, whether the objects of our long desire have been carried thither or not. We and the *Anna Maria* will follow those guns to the world's end, if need be."

"There are many islands in the West Indies," declared Master Babcock. "Suppose you search them all and still fail to find what you seek?"

"There is only one time when it will be fitting for us to talk of a chance of failure," Captain Bardwell answered him.

"And when is that?" said James Babcock.

"When we are certain that we have succeeded," replied Andrew Bardwell.

They were well on their course southwestward, when, on a gray and windy morning, the captain, Master Babcock, the two mates and David all chanced to be together on the after deck. Anthony Churchill was asking David some questions, but the boy interrupted him.

"Hark," he said, lifting his head to listen, "I hear the sound of guns."

"It is only the booming of the wind in the sails," Anthony Churchill assured him. "I hear no sound of such a kind."

"But it is there," David insisted. "It comes from dead ahead."

After a little, Anthony Churchill also heard the far-distant voices of cannon. The day was too gray and misty for the lookout to give them any report of a sail; but it soon became evident that there was indeed some sea battle raging there beyond their vision.

"We are going directly toward it," George Willets said to Captain Bardwell. "Do you wish to alter the course, sir?"

"No," answered Captain Bardwell. "We will go on."

CHAPTER XIII

THE GIFT OF THE *PEGASUS*

Historians have not set down any account of that engagement off the Azores, in which three English vessels fought against three Spanish, in a battle that was well nigh to the death for all of them. It was at a time when the two nations were nominally at peace; or when for some years, at least, there had been a truce in that long struggle in which Spain and France, on the one side, and England, on the other, fought intermittently through the whole course of that century. Both Spain and France had been watching eagerly for a moment to renew hostilities; and France had been building up her fleet with the hope of disputing at last England's mighty power upon the sea. The growing quarrel of King George with his American colonies had set every Frenchman and Spaniard eagerly upon the watch; since it was plain that were England involved in one struggle, she would inevitably have a second one upon her hands. It was not for three years later that the war between Spain and England was actually renewed; but there was many an informal

skirmish upon the high seas in which Frenchman and Spaniard tried their old adversary's power. Reports of these seldom reached home. When a good ship came limping, crippled and torn, into her own port, there was no great number of questions asked as to whether it were wind or weather, or a different enemy, which had put her in such a plight.

In this battle, it was never known which side fired an arrogant, summoning shot, and which side answered by roaring out a defiant broadside. A British frigate and a ship-of-the-line had fallen in with three far larger Spanish war vessels; and, no matter how it came about, they were presently engaged in desperate encounter. Odds were against the English captain, and the fight went hard with him from the very beginning. It was early morning when the battle commenced; and, by noon, after the fiercest and bravest of struggles, it began to seem that there was nothing left for him but to strike his colors or to be sunk. Help had arrived, however, from an unexpected quarter. A third English battleship, passing on a distant course, had heard the sound of guns, had come nearer to investigate, and seeing her countrymen in such hard case, had come with headlong haste to their assistance.

She was an old ship, a great, majestic ship, with

a tremendous spread of sail, but with no great speed in the quick turns and maneuvers of which the more modern man-of-war was capable.

"Ah, if you could but have seen the *Pegasus* go into action," one of the British officers said to David, afterward. "Every flag was flying, her decks were cleared, her crew was cheering, and every gunport was belching flame. We were crippled and well-nigh beyond the power of help; but she drew the whole fire of the Spaniards and for a time bore the brunt of the entire fight alone. When we had patched up our rudder and the frigate had somewhat repaired her sails so that she could handle herself again, we came once more into the fight. That time we beat the Spaniards off; but it was too late to save the *Pegasus*."

The *Anna Maria* had come up at the end of the afternoon, an hour after the struggle was ended. The Spaniards were no longer in sight, having finally beaten a retreat to the nearest port, in ignominious flight. The frigate swung, almost helpless in the fitful wind, while the *Princess Elizabeth*, the line-of-battleship, was in scarcely better plight. Those on board the *Anna Maria* could see that beyond the *Princess Elizabeth* lay a third vessel, with her masts down and all her rigging and sails trailing overboard. She was but a shattered and powerless

hulk; and whether she was Englishman or Spaniard they could not tell. Andrew Bardwell brought his schooner as close alongside the *Princess Elizabeth* as was possible and sent a hail across the intervening space.

"What ship is that?" came a call of the man-of-war and the answer was returned:

"The New England schooner, *Anna Maria,* sailing from the Baltic to the West Indies."

"And your cargo, man?" shouted the British officer. David saw that he almost fell over the rail in his eagerness as he listened to the answer.

"Lumber and iron, Russian duck and hemp," was the reply.

The man on the English vessel, phlegmatic Briton as he was, gave a shout of relief and delight. Without further parley he hastened across the deck to carry the news to his captain.

Almost before Andrew Bardwell could come on board, it had been practically arranged that the English vessel should take over the schooner's cargo. The British captain seemed to feel that the *Anna Maria,* gray and weather-beaten as she was, had come sailing straight from heavenly regions to his assistance. His situation was even more desperate than, at first sight, it had appeared to be; for, as he explained to Captain Bardwell, he felt certain that

the Spaniard's precipitate retreat foretold a prompt return.

"There are, to my knowledge, three French vessels lying in the harbor of Fayal, where the Spaniard has sought refuge," said the English captain. "The news that three crippled English vessels are within reach, and are so damaged that they cannot make for port, will be glad tidings for the Frenchmen. It will not be long before they will all come speeding back together, and if I have been unable to make sail before that moment, it will be the end of me. My admiral may forgive a chance skirmish upon the seas in time of peace; but even should I survive, I will never be forgiven the loss of my ship."

David, who had accompanied Andrew Bardwell when he went aboard the *Princess Elizabeth,* stood looking about him at the ghastly havoc wrought by the battle. Splintered decks, dismounted guns, broken or completely shattered spars, were all about him. The dead and wounded had most of them been cared for; but there were still traces everywhere of the death and destruction that had attended the long fight.

"But our case is not like the one of that ship yonder," said an officer who stood near him.

David looked across at the dismasted vessel.

Huge, gaping wounds had been torn along her side, just above the waterline; her mast and spars were smashed beyond any hope of repair. She rocked helplessly in the choppy sea, the great mass of rope and canvas listing her heavily and jerking cruelly at her, as she rose to every wave.

"She bore the whole fight for us and saved us from destruction," said the officer, "yet look at her now. She has lost her captain and all of her officers, except the youngest midshipman; and there is scarcely a handful of the crew left. Our captain says that with the help that you have brought, we and the frigate may hope to get away; but there will be naught to do with this vessel except to scuttle her."

At that moment the helpless ship swung around, so that David could see the one portion of her that, by chance, had escaped with little injury. Her splendid figurehead still rose undamaged above the hungry, licking waves, a great, winged horse, rearing triumphantly with outspread pinions, even in this hour of complete disaster. David's heart gave a leap within him. Here was the ship of his hopes and dreams, the beloved *Pegasus,* who had at last fought her supreme battle.

"She has made a splendid finish, the last of a glorious record," said the officer at his elbow. "She

should not fall into the hands of the Spaniards or the French, but should go to the bottom undefeated, even at the end."

The boy stood staring long at the torn ship, pitiful in her broken majesty. The English officer told him more of the battle; but, since David said little in reply, he seemed to think the Yankee boy felt no interest in what he had to say, turned from him, and walked away. David gazed and gazed; but at last, with a sigh, gathered his wits together and went back to his captain's side, where he obviously belonged.

"In the matter of purchasing your cargo," the British captain was saying, "I do not know quite what to say. We were returning from a long voyage and ready money is not overabundant with us. And you Yankees are shrewd traders; I doubt not you want a round price for all that you have given us. And I should pay it; for you have brought us hope of safety, as well as iron and sail-cloth and lumber."

"We will not speak of that now," replied Andrew Bardwell. "It is a matter of greater moment to swing out our iron and lumber as quickly as may be, so that you may be able to accomplish repairs in time. We will talk of prices later, when we have made certain that we have saved you."

The hoisting-shears were set up hastily upon the deck of the *Anna Maria,* lanterns were hung in her rigging and in that of the English ship. She was laid alongside, under the quarter of the man-of-war; and all through the night her crew toiled without ceasing to bring up the bulky cargo from the hold. Not the silks and spices, not even the jewels of Jacob Van Dyer, had been worth so much as were the long planks of sweet-smelling lumber, the bales of hemp and of duck, and the clumsy, black billets of iron. Ship's carpenters, sailmakers, and the blacksmith carried by the battleship, fell to work instantly upon these precious materials; for in their prompt use lay the only hope of safety.

Before morning, the task of emptying the schooner had been brought almost to an end; the English captain expressed himself as satisfied with the amount that he had received. The sound of hammers rose in every direction on both ships; and the misfortunes of battle seemed already forgotten in the hearty preparation for fresh achievements.

The British officers had had as little sleep as had Andrew Bardwell or his seamen. It was a weary, gray-faced company which met on the quarter-deck of the battleship, when the work of unloading the *Anna Maria* was at last nearing its conclusion. James Babcock alone looked cheerful and un-

quenched; even Captain Bardwell's strong face showed heavy lines of fatigue. Anthony Churchill, borne up until now by the excitement of the night's labor, looked so drooping and weary as scarcely to be able to stand. As for David, he was leaning against the rail, staring at that loved ship which he had last seen breasting the great waves of the north Atlantic, with the hollow of her sails filled with moonlight, a vision which he had carried in his heart for so long. Andrew Bardwell had brought them all with him, as owners of the *Anna Maria* and her cargo.

"You have been the means of saving us all," said the British captain, "and I owe you more than I can ever hope to repay. And how I am to pay you even in part, I vow I do not know. There is only a handful of guineas left in the coffers of the *Princess Elizabeth,* after our period in the West Indies. What may have been on board the *Pegasus* I do not know. She came up unawares, from what port and upon what course, I have no idea. Her sole surviving officer is a midshipman of eighteen years, whom we will presently take on board, with what is left of the crew. The contents of her cabin have been blown to fragments; so, if she carried any coin of the realm, it is not at my disposal. And the commander of the frigate is no better off than I. We

would offer you anything, Captain Bardwell, short of our honor; but what have we to give you?"

Andrew Bardwell looked at James Babcock, then at David and Anthony, and then turned back to face the Englishman.

"We want no payment," he said.

"But," protested the other, "you cannot afford to give up your cargo thus. It is most likely that your whole substance was invested in this schooner. Is it not so?"

At this James Babcock spoke.

"We four," he said, "are merchant adventurers who have, as you surmise, risked our all upon this voyage. We have fallen upon very evil fortunes; and it had seemed that a successful end had been relentlessly denied us. But I know I speak for those owners here present, and for another who is now gone, when I say that we give you freely all that we have. After a battle in peace time," he added bluntly, "you would fare very ill should you fall into the hands of the Spaniard."

The Englishman looked at him keenly. "Yankees, in these times, are not wont to be so friendly to the servants of King George," he observed.

It was Andrew Bardwell who answered him.

"We once made a very evil bargain," he said slowly, "one that we have regretted with all our

hearts. And with those same hearts we are grateful that the chance has come to us to make a fairer and more honorable one. Although Yankees and Britons are, at this moment, enemies as to politics, they have not yet ceased to be somewhat akin."

"It is not possible for us to receive unrequited favors," insisted the British captain stiffly. "It is necessary that you should have some return. Do neither of you other two, who are also owners of the schooner, think of anything that you would have? Look at that boy, Captain Bardwell; there is some desire in his heart; I can read it plainly enough. Speak up, lad; what is it you would receive?"

David's face was all alight with the thought that had suddenly come to him; but he would not voice it until Andrew Bardwell and James Babcock added their urging to the English captain's.

"Come, David," said Master Babcock, "it is plain that there is some burning thought within you. Let us hear it before it consumes you entirely. What is it you would have?"

"Let him give us the salvage of that ship," cried David. "They say she must be sent to the bottom. Let us take what we can from her, or save her if it is possible."

It was a boyish notion, born of his great grief at

the thought that the noble *Pegasus* must perish. Yet, fantastic as it was, it seemed to please them all.

"If you will consider that a proper recompense," said the Englishman, "it were no bad thing for you to rescue from her what you can. We have all that we can do to repair our own damage, and get out of the way of the returning enemy. I had some hopes of towing her into port; but, as the hours pass, that chance grows ever smaller. The metal of her sixty guns might be of some use to you; although on a ship of that age they are unwieldy, old-fashioned things at best. I have been told that a dozen of them burst and that more were dismounted and destroyed by the enemy's fire. If it be your wish, then take her; but I urge you, Captain Bardwell, to make all speed in getting her into some near-by harbor, that she may not fall into the hands of Frenchman or Spaniard."

Andrew Bardwell gave the required promise, smiling somewhat as he did so; for he seemed to feel, with the British officer, that the plan was a more picturesque than practical one. It was for such romantic spirits as Master Babcock's and David's that the idea held real glamor.

"I will write an order to her commanding officer to give over the ship to you," said the Englishman.

He and Ben Turner, in the gig, pulled up to the broken Pegasus. *Page 283.*

"Will you go aboard yourself, Captain Bardwell, to take possession?"

"I have work of greater importance still in hand; for there is yet some lumber and iron to be got out for your frigate," answered Andrew Bardwell. "I will send David Dennison to carry your orders to the commander of the *Pegasus.*"

Only one seaman could be spared to go with David, so that he did not feel very impressive as he and Ben Turner, in the gig, pulled up to the broken *Pegasus.* There was no approaching her on the port side, where the whole of her masts and rigging trailed in the water; but by coming up to the starboard and sending a hail to those on the deck above, they were able to find a point where they could make fast and clamber on board. Tragedy, stark and terrible, was written everywhere upon her scarred decks, her stumps of masts, and upon the faces of the handful of men who were gathered in the bow, waiting to go aboard the other ship. But heroism was written there as plainly; so that it was as possible to read the story of the gallant end of the *Pegasus* from the wreckage about them, as to learn it from the halting or casual accounts of the various seamen.

"Yonder is our one officer who is left," said the boatswain, who had come limping to meet them as

they came over the side. "Will you wait, sir, until I go to tell him that you are here?"

"No, I will go aft to speak to him myself," David answered.

Past the whole length of the cumbered deck, he could see a figure standing under the lanterns on the high poop; a figure very slim and small at that far distance. He walked aft slowly, picking his way among the wrecked guns and the great holes torn in the planking. He mounted to the quarter-deck and approached the waiting officer hesitatingly. How would he himself be feeling, he wondered, if he had been in command of this splendid ship and must abandon her?

The officer, although he was evidently awaiting David's approach, stood looking out to sea, and scarcely turned his head. He was hatless, his uniform was torn and blackened with powder, and his arm was in a sling. He turned; and the two stood staring at each other in unspoken recognition. It was the young midshipman, Hapgood, with whom David had fought in the cabin of the schooner for the Rights of Man.

The English lad held out his hand for the order, read it, and gave it back to David.

"I give over the ship to you," he said gravely, but with no longer any swaggering air of self-

importance. "You will not have long possession of her, for there is every chance that she will sink within the hour."

He looked away again and then, suddenly setting his arm upon the base of the great, round lantern above the rail, he buried his face against it. He was very young; he had been through the shattering experience of his first battle; and he evidently loved the brave old ship just as David did.

The Yankee boy stood by in silence, his own heart big within him.

"They say you were in command during the end of the fight," he said at last. "If you could know how I envy you that hour! Ever since I first saw the *Pegasus,* I have dreamed of standing just here on her quarterdeck, and taking her into action."

The young midshipman lifted his head.

"She made a glorious end," he said. "The men went on loading and firing even after there scarce seemed enough of the crew left to handle a single gun. We grappled with the Spaniard, but he cut himself free; yet, as he swung loose, we poured a last broadside into him that sent him limping out of the fight. But the second Spaniard raked us and brought down our mainmast, and after that we were helpless. It was magnificent to see how the men fought, to the very last."

He waited for a moment, for he had spoken the last with a break in his voice.

"Do you remember," he went on, in an evident effort to speak of something else, "a man, Jethro Slee, who shipped on board the *Dryad* and told Captain Carver that you were to sail from Benton with a contraband cargo and were to drop anchor at Half-Moon Island? He insisted that you were going to embark on some venture treacherous to England and King George; he hinted that it was piracy."

"I remember him," said David briefly. "What is become of him?"

"He was found to be a traitor, who was selling secrets of the French and Spaniards to us, and selling ours to them. In the end he tried to knife the boatswain, and Captain Carver hanged him to the yardarm and that was the last of him."

His drawn face relaxed a moment; perhaps he was thinking of the fight on board the *Anna Maria*. But he made no mention of it as he continued:

"It was Jethro Slee whose panic caused my men to run away from that strange company of black devils we met in the hollow of Half-Moon Island. Afterward he insisted that it was Captain Carver's duty to go back and hang the man for a sorcerer. Even when we reached the West Indies, he was still babbling of the witchcraft which had threat-

ened our safety. The sailors all vowed he brought us bad luck. He was a man of evil omen, wherever he went."

"What port was the *Pegasus* bound for, that she came so unexpectedly to the aid of the English ships?" asked David.

"She was being sent out to the Windward Islands; we had sealed orders as to whither we were to proceed from there." He drew himself up with some of the old cock-sure dignity David had seen at their first meeting. "A King's officer may not hold converse with a Yankee as to what our next duty was to be."

He had talked himself into better spirits; and now was ready to take his leave.

"Except for my sword," he said, "I have nothing to bear away with me. I — I am glad that I need not be near when the *Pegasus* goes down."

He hesitated a moment, then gravely offered David his hand. The Yankee boy took it without speaking; and the young officer of the King strode away. He was older, far more truly dignified, and many times more of a man than on that night of the encounter in the cabin of the schooner. A boat from the frigate had rowed up and lay waiting alongside of the *Anna Maria's* gig. With his little company of sailors, he embarked and was carried

away. David noticed that he never looked back at the brave ship which he was leaving.

For a moment, David stood alone on the quarter-deck, trying to feel great and magnificent, as he had so often seen himself in waking dreams. But, instead, he seemed, as he stood there beneath the tall battle lanterns, to be a person very small and insignificant at the end of that enormous length of deck, upon which the tale of the great fight was so vividly recorded. He had taken no part in the battle, and he could feel no glory now. He must give over his dreams and visions and turn to the task of exploring the vessel.

He and Ben Turner were alone on board, although Captain Bardwell had promised to send more men, and to come himself as soon as the labor going forward on the *Anna Maria* should permit. As David came slowly down from the quarter-deck, walked a great way along the torn planking, and approached an open hatch amidships, the old seaman came forward and, most incautiously, spoke in anxious warning.

"You should not go down there, Master David. The breaches in the ship's side are like church windows for size, and should the wind blow heavier by as much as a breath, the seas will come in, and over she will go. You would drown among the rats there

below, just like one of them. Let me go down alone, sir."

It was then that David gave his one order as supreme commander of the *Pegasus*.

"Do you stay here on watch, Turner," he directed. "It is I who am going down alone."

No protestations on the old sailor's part could shake his resolution; and, with Ben Turner still voluble with mournful warnings, David stepped through the hatchway. The gun deck below was in almost worse plight than the open spaces above, with its burst cannon, its ports torn open, and its planking plowed in all directions by round shot. He found a lantern which would still burn, although its glass had been shivered; and, lighting this, he went down a second ladder into the hold. At first the gaping wounds in the vessel's side afforded him sufficient light; but as he descended below the water line he plunged into darkness, with the sounds of gurgling water and the scampering of rats all about him, and with his lantern making but a tiny island of yellow light in the deep sea of gloom.

He came to the foot of the longest ladder and groped his way forward. There was water in the lower hold, deep enough to wash about his feet. What were these dark, bulky shapes piled in long rows from end to end of the vast, dim space? His

foot stumbled against one of them; there came the dull ring of heavy metal; and he stooped down to feel. The lantern slipped from his hand and went out with a hiss in the black water. But he had seen enough — a long black muzzle with a star stamped upon its edge, and the initials J. B. The ancient *Pegasus* was loaded with John Becket's guns!

A moment later he was scrambling up toward the round spot of daylight above him, in sudden mad haste and terror lest the wrecked vessel should sink before he could show Andrew Bardwell what it was she carried. Suppose those cold, heaving seas should come tumbling in now, and drown the secret of what it was that the *Pegasus* bore! He came out upon the upper deck at last, popping out of the hatchway and fairly throwing himself upon Ben Turner in a frenzy of wild excitement. The old seaman gave a shout of delight on seeing him emerge safely, but sobered to solemn wonder when he saw David's face.

"What did you see there below? A ghost, Master David? But look, there's a boat from the schooner alongside, and here's the captain and Master Babcock coming aboard."

"So this is your ship, David!" James Babcock began, as he stepped upon the deck. "The size of your vessel and the size of the prize crew you have

aboard her, seem to be somewhat out of accord."

But David was not heeding; he was pouring out to Andrew Bardwell the news of what he had found. The latter listened, his ruddy face going as white as the boy's.

"What was that?" he cried sharply. "Do I hear you aright — guns, did you say *guns,* David?"

David nodded without speaking further.

"There could never have been any chance of taking her into port," Andrew Bardwell said after a moment, "and we can only hope to get aboard such of these guns as our schooner will carry. There is no question now of whether we are to have war or peace; the doubt is only whether we can get vessel and cargo home in time for America's desperate need."

The crew of the *Anna Maria* had worked like beavers in behalf of the British vessels; they worked like fiends now. They had given up all their own lumber to the English ships; but they tore up the planking of the deck and cut asunder the torn sails to make a temporary bulkhead along the shattered sides of the *Pegasus.*

"It will serve until the wind freshens," said the ship's carpenter, "and then nothing will save her."

Through hastily opened hatchways they swung

out the guns, big cannon and small ship's guns and fieldpieces, muskets, round shot, kegs of powder and bullets. Some of the powder was already wet, but, by dint of hoisting it out first, they contrived to save the most of it. Had it not been stored so deep below the waterline, the stout *Pegasus* would have blown up in the midst of the battle, carrying the English and Spanish ships to destruction with her. It was but a small portion of her lading that the *Anna Maria* could stow away, but all that was possible was got aboard in wild haste.

The two English vessels had drifted apart from the *Pegasus* and the *Anna Maria,* and lay now almost half a mile away, busy with the urgent haste of their repairs. By mid-afternoon the frigate had rigged her jury spars and had got up sail; and by nightfall the *Princess Elizabeth* was able to follow her example. The larger ship fired a gun as a final salute to the *Anna Maria,* and as last thanks to the vessel which had brought such welcome succor. Then the two men-of-war got under way and were soon lost in the dark of a cloudy night. Since the young midshipman had gone on board the frigate, it was doubtful whether the British captain heard, until many hours after, what it was the *Pegasus* carried and what sort of gift he had made over to the Yankee schooner.

Late that evening, David, toiling on the deck, saw an odd expression upon the face of James Babcock, who was laboring near him as earnestly as any able seaman.

"What is it?" the boy asked, for Master Babcock, stopping to wipe his grimy and heated face, was smiling to himself.

"I was thinking of that stiff Englishman," he replied. "Did you note that he asked no single question as to where we got our Russian duck, our Swedish iron and our Norwegian pine? Contraband goods, all of them, forbidden to American ships. He was in a great taking to assure his own safety and could not afford to be curious. It was past his comprehension that we should offer him aid for nothing, and that we should take in payment a ship which, he thought in his heart, would sink within the hour. Well, well, an Englishman is more to us than a Spaniard, and I am glad he got away. But I would that I could be by to see his face when the young midshipman tells him of the guns!"

The wind was light through the whole of the night; but began to freshen at early morning. The seas rose; the first one came splashing up against the rude bulkhead; and the water began oozing through. The great *Pegasus* staggered a little, and listed more heavily.

"Clear the ship," ordered Andrew Bardwell, and looking at David's disappointed face, added, "We have got aboard quite as much as the schooner can safely carry."

But it was not the thought of leaving a portion of the guns behind that troubled David. He stood in the bow of the *Anna Maria* and watched, with agony in his eyes, how the mighty ship careened slowly, then, with a rush and a roar, went down. Her stern dropped first; and her bow rose high, with the great horse rearing far aloft, spreading his broad wings in the semblance of a last wild defiance of that towering, white-capped wave which was reaching up for him. David had to look away as, in a final plunge, the flying horse went under and was drowned forever in a smother of green water and white foam.

The sun was high when the fleet of men-of-war — three Spanish and three French — came upon the scene of the recent encounter. A huddle of wreckage, tossing on the uneasy swells, was all that marked the burial place of a great and historic ship. A fishing smack had given the Spanish flagship news of the departure of the English vessels and information as to what course they had taken; so that the whole fleet swung about and heeled over to the wind in hasty pursuit. They had no need to stop or hold

converse with a certain Yankee schooner, which was making sail to the westward. She lay somewhat low in the water; and she flew the long blue pennant that marks a ship as homeward bound.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SCHOOLHOUSE

They dropped southward and, standing some miles off the Islands of Madeira, they put Master Babcock ashore in a small boat, his destination Porto Santo. It was his plan to find some swifter sailing ship than their own vessel, which, touching at the Islands, as most of the colonial trade was in the habit of doing, would carry him home to New England before the arrival of the schooner. He would thus arrange for the landing of the guns, so that the matter could be carried through with the greatest speed and the least danger of loss.

"We have the good English captain's written order, granting us possession of anything on board the *Pegasus,*" said Andrew Bardwell; "but I doubt if such a document would stand us in very good stead should it come to the ears of King George that we are carrying guns into his insubordinate colony."

Two days later there passed them, sailing westward, a stout ship whose lines spelled New England as truly as did the white steeple on the hill

above Benton Harbor. She was making good time; and there could be no doubt that Master Babcock was safely on board her. Thereafter, the *Anna Maria,* seeking out a route less traveled than the ordinary highway from the Islands to the New England coast, cracked on all sail and made her best speed homeward. Sometimes they flew before favorable breezes that lifted their spirits and made their hearts beat high; sometimes they were delayed by light or adverse winds that rendered every soul on board restless and impatient.

"When these head winds blow," declared Anthony Churchill, "I vow I begin to imagine that I hear the sound of gun-fire wafted to us the whole of the way from Massachusetts Bay. I cannot be satisfied but that there is danger of their beginning without us."

"Though they may begin," Ben Turner told him sagely, "they will be a long time ending. You need not fear that you will lose your pleasure, Master Churchill."

They came at last within sight of those shores that made David's heart leap within him, through knowledge of home-coming. The low green hills, the gray rocks, and the small towns lying white above the harbors — he had seen nothing half so beautiful in all the course of his long voyaging.

The *Anna Maria* did not put in at the port from which she had sailed; but first stood off Cape Cod, waiting for a messenger, an ancient sailor from Provincetown, who was to bring them word when Master Babcock should be ready. He came aboard with his welcome tidings on the third day. They drew northward, and for some weeks following were coasting up and down the shores of Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. They avoided the wider and more frequented harbors; but it was many a wooded cove, many a mouth of a steep tumbling river that saw the presence of the *Anna Maria,* slipping in with the dusk and stealing out to sea again with the morning tide. Very careful and very cunning had been the preparations made by Master Babcock. At not one of the appointed places did they fail to see the familiar signal lantern or, when they came on shore, were they disappointed of the sight of a heavy wagon and four stout horses, waiting to carry away the precious guns. David used to watch them creaking off up the beach, or down the rocky track from some jutting headland, disappearing into the dark with the treasure that the schooner had brought from so far. It seemed to him almost a dream that the long-hoped-for vision of their voyage had at last been fulfilled. And as he looked about at the still woods, at the rocks and

sands, and the white breakers rolling in under the moon and the starlight, it seemed to him that those peaceful and familiar scenes could never be disturbed by the thunder of those same cannon.

"Will they ever be used?" he said one night to Anthony Churchill, as the last of the boats had discharged its heavy and unwieldy freight into the hands of the silent men waiting upon the beach.

"All too soon," answered Anthony, who had been on shore with Master Babcock and had heard more of the news of the day than had David. "It will not be long now before the quiet slumbers of those Boards of Trade and Lords in Council, over yonder in London, will be rudely broken by the booming of guns upon the shores of New England."

It was in the small harbor of Kittery that they put off the last of their cargo. Anthony Churchill had remained with Master Babcock at York; and Andrew Bardwell, taking Nat Christy with him, went ashore with the last guns. George Willets and David were to have charge of the schooner and were to take her to Benton Harbor, where, with no contraband lading, she ought to be able to cast anchor without questioning. They sailed with a good wind, and came in through the reefs and shoals at ten o'clock of a breezy spring morning. David looked up at the rocky headland, at the smooth green

of the new April grass that crept up to the gray of the rocks; lifted his eyes to the white rolling clouds in the blue sky, where the gulls were circling like dull flecks of silver, and said in his heart that this spot, of all the places in the world, was surely the very fairest.

They dropped anchor at almost the same place where the *Anna Maria* had rocked and swung with the tide on the night before her sailing. David was making leisurely preparations to go ashore, when he saw a small boat put out from the wharf and come rowing toward them, with all the speed that one not very large oarsman was able to muster. Looking down over the rail he stared in surprise at Nat Christy's upturned, freckled face.

"Master David," he panted out, "the revenue officers have been waiting for the coming of the *Anna Maria,* and have a warrant for arresting you. We heard of it at Kittery and Captain Bardwell sent me in haste to warn you. The brig *Dryad* is in Boston harbor again, and her captain had sent word that the King's men should watch everywhere for the schooner's return. They have looked up the registered names of her owners, and are bent on seizing Captain Bardwell, Master Babcock, Anthony Churchill and you. These others are safe where the officers cannot find them; but if you delay

only a moment longer, they will lay hands upon you."

David did not stop to speak or even to look behind him; he dropped into Nat Christy's little boat and pushed off without a word. He seized one oar, while Nat, hot and breathless, once more bent manfully to the other. They swung out from under the stern of the schooner, and headed for the rocky point a quarter of a mile away.

"If we come round the bow of that sloop," David said quietly to Nat, "those boatmen yonder may not see that we have put off from the *Anna Maria*."

He had already seen a long boat setting out from the Customs House wharf, with six men at the oars and the red coat of an official of some sort plainly visible in the stern.

Their hope of getting away unnoticed was doomed to disappointment. In a moment, they saw that the larger boat, in a long curve, was changing its course and making after them. The tide was ebbing and was carrying them out, so that, if they were to reach shore, it must be almost at the end of the point. If they beached their boat where a tiny cove of friendly sand offered them opportunity, they might still scramble up the rocks and escape. The revenue men were hard upon them as they ran in behind a line of jutting bowlders and grounded on the beach.

"Leave the boat. Do you run along the shore on the northward side of the point, while I climb to the rocks above."

So David directed, feeling that they were safer apart and that Nat Christy had the better chance should he take his line of flight along the waterside, out of sight of their pursuers. He himself ran quickly up the brief slope of the shore and began to clamber up the steep but well-known way, to the top of the headland.

With a shout below, the King's men made him aware that they had seen him. He looked over his shoulder and saw three men jump from the bow and come wading, waist-deep, past the rocks and up on the sand. The others, swinging their craft about, turned their course toward the base of the point, evidently designing to come ashore there, and to cut him off from the mainland.

He had reached the top of the high headland now, and went running through the tangled paths where blackberry vines sought to trip him, and where the close-leaved bayberries hid the rocks over which he stumbled now and again. Here it was that he had had that strange encounter with Jethro Slee; but he had no thought of that matter now. To be so near to home and safety, and perhaps yet to be carried away to an English prison! He ran

forward, desperate in his haste, hearing sounds below that told him plainly that the boat had already come to shore, that the men were mounting the steep path. There was no building or shelter of any sort, save, just before him, the little schoolhouse where Janet had once said that she was to rule. The men were out of sight as they came winding up the face of the steep cliff. David paused, looking wildly about him. If the schoolhouse were empty, it might offer him shelter. There was no other hope of safety. He opened the door and went in.

The sunny room was full of children, droning and buzzing over their lessons; while, gracious Heaven, there beside the teacher's desk stood a King's officer in a scarlet coat, talking with Mistress Janet Harris. Janet's brows were level, her eyes were clear, and her face untroubled, as she looked up at the newcomer.

"You are late, David," she said. "Take your place at the end of the bench and get to your spelling lesson." And she added to the red-coated officer, "These big boys are such great sluggards; my patience is quite outdone with them."

David sat down upon the bench in a daze, opened the battered speller before him and sat staring at it. The smaller boys and girls turned their heads and

looked curiously at him; but children are prone to take things as a matter of course; and, since their teacher accepted the stranger without surprise, so did they. It was quite true that the big boys on the last bench were most of them of the same size as David, and as shabby. The man in the King's coat looked curiously at him once or twice, then walked to the door. There was the sound of voices outside as he opened it; and he spoke to some one on the threshold. David heard him utter a sharp exclamation, then, instead of turning back with the revenue officers at his heels, he went out, closing the door quickly behind him.

The minutes dragged on; the clock ticked on the wall, and the hands slowly moved toward the hour of noon. David noticed that Janet presently got up, and, under pretext of winding the clock, pushed the hands forward as though she, too, felt that she must hurry them or perish. Even then it seemed that they stood stationary and that the dragging morning would never come to an end.

At last, however, the two hands stood upright together and the twanging voice of the clock announced the hour of noon. Janet struck with her ferrule upon her desk; and the children stood up in decorous order and marched toward the door. It seemed an immeasurable time before they were all

gone and the two were left, David upon his bench, and Janet rising from her place at the teacher's desk. As she came toward him, David, who had been so restless and impatient for the last hour, found suddenly that he could not move.

"Janet," he said in a voice so husky that he scarcely knew it for his own. He could speak but that single word.

She had opened her lips to reply when there came a thundering knock at the door. David sprang up. This time the girl's courage and control had failed; she was trembling and the tears were rolling down her face.

"They shall not take you," she whispered. "They shall not take you."

The door swung open; and the broad, red face of Peleg Durfee was thrust inside.

"Welcome home to you, David Dennison," he said breathlessly. "Do you hear the people running; do you hear the bells ringing? You are so newly come home that perhaps you have not even heard the tidings of the fighting at Lexington and Concord; four days past, that was. Now the British forces are all drawing in toward Boston, and orders have come to our fine redcoats here, to join the main command. We are ringing them out of town with good will and rejoicing; and they are

making good haste to be gone. It begins to be plain to them that a war has begun."

The guns which the *Anna Maria* had brought from across the sea spoke at Breed's Hill; they frowned down from the fortifications of Dorchester, and drove a dismayed British general to take refuge on board his fleet. They marched with General Washington; they defended the storm-beaten camp of Valley Forge; and they thundered in salute of victory at Yorktown. And throughout the years of the war, they were copied and improved upon by the clever American ironmasters at every forge and furnace in the colonies.

Anthony Churchill marched with them and rose to a command in Washington's army. In later years, as had been prophesied, he was one of the leaders of the free country and sat high in the councils of the new nation. Master Babcock's wisdom and wit stood America in good stead; and, in some of the darkest hours of the struggle, hope and courage rose again under the spur of his brave jesting. Once, long after, when David spoke to him of how good an account had been rendered, during the war, by all that company of the *Anna Maria,* James Babcock shook his head.

"The bravest man was left behind," he said.

"Could any one have found this war more to his liking or more to his glory than Hugh Darrow?"

Washington's army did not see David. He had gone to sea, sailing first under Andrew Bardwell, and later coming to bear high responsibilities of his own. It was a great day when he and Captain Bardwell brought into port the armed brig *Dryad,* a battered prize, with her captain and her crew as prisoners of war. It was a moment he long remembered — that of seeing the King's vessel haul down her colors — a great moment and a joyful one. But there was one other occasion which, somehow, was to live even more vividly in his memory.

It was on a stormy day of winter, with shrieking winds, and with seas breaking over the bow of their ship, to leave fringes of ice wherever the spray had fallen. The vessel on which David sailed was lying three miles off Half-Moon Island, waiting for a British ship that, it had been said, was bound to pass that way. The lookout announced a sail, but came down to the deck to explain that it was only one of the smallest kind. Over the gray, seething water, they could make out a small craft approaching, a dory with a single battered rag of canvas. Over and over it disappeared in the trough of the great seas, apparently never to come up again. Then it would be seen once more, riding the next

wave like a cork, and heading steadily toward them. At last it came alongside and a very ancient and weather-beaten seaman scrambled aboard and asked for speech with the captain.

"I should like to sign on with you, sir," said Adam Applegate. The two years that had passed had broken him greatly; but those gray sparks of eyes still smoldered with the same fire. "I am an old seaman, and a good sailmaker, as you already know; and, if I may speak up in my own behalf, I am an even better gunner. A mackerel boat brought in word that you were lying off the island, and I put off in my dory at once. I have heard that the times are so pressing that you often have to put to sea with a scant crew, and would be glad of an extra hand."

The young captain agreed that this was true; yet stood reflecting for a moment as he weighed his decision.

"I will give you good service," the old man added desperately. "I will know my place and never offer advice to mortal man again so long as I live. And this is a chance for which I have hungered through every one of the weary, lonely years I have passed on Half-Moon Island. I have never before seen that white-and-red flag that flies from your jack-staff yonder; but it stands for all that I have

dreamed of since my own wrong-doing banished me from New England forever. Do you not think that to die for the cause in which you are striving would be the best end for such a life as mine? I could ask for naught better."

So was Adam Applegate's name set down upon the rolls of the ship *Patriot,* privateer, sailing out of Benton Harbor, David Dennison master.

THE END

Henry Pitz